V-H-3

APR 13 1967

200
WEO
34/7

LIBRARY
EVANGELICAL SCHOOL
OF THEOLOGY

Gift of

Rev. Frederick A. MacMillen

WHAT TO PREACH

THE WARRACK LECTURES FOR 1926 IN NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH, AND IN THE COLLEGES OF THE UNITED FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND IN GLASGOW AND ABERDEEN

THESE LECTURES WERE ALSO GIVEN AS THE RUSSELL LECTURES AT AUBURN SEMINARY, AND AS THE SWANDER LECTURES IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES AT LANCASTER, PENNA.

BY

HENRY SLOANE COFFIN

Brown Professor of Homiletics and Pastoral Theology, and President of the Faculty, in Union Theological Seminary

NEW YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

WHAT TO PREACH

BY

HENRY SLOANE COFFIN

BROWN PROFESSOR OF HOMILETICS AND PASTORAL THEOLOGY, AND PRESIDENT OF THE FACULTY, IN UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

LIBRARY OF
UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
BV
4211
.C55
12,130

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

COPYRIGHT, 1926,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

WHAT TO PREACH
— B —
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO THE CONGREGATION

OF THE

MADISON AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

WHO HAVE GIVEN ME THEIR ENRICHING FRIEND-
SHIP IN OUR WORK TOGETHER FOR
ONE AND TWENTY YEARS

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

CONTENTS

LECTURE		PAGE
I.	Expository Preaching	11
II.	Doctrinal Preaching	47
III.	Ethical Preaching	83
IV.	Pastoral Preaching	119
V.	Evangelistic Preaching	155

LECTURE I

EXPOSITORY PREACHING

LECTURE I

EXPOSITORY PREACHING

A YOUTH, who nearly thirty years ago sat where you now sit, found himself again and again haunted by the misgiving that he would never have enough to preach to keep him ministering to a congregation week in and week out. He had not spoken in public for more than ten or fifteen minutes on any theme. He had found himself barely able to fill five minutes with ideas on even the greatest subject. How would it be possible for him, twice on a Sunday, forty odd weeks every year, to preach interestingly and enrichingly for half an hour? During his course in divinity he received much useful counsel on *how* to preach; but he would return to his room to be tormented by the old perplexity *what* to preach, so as to be supplied with arresting and informing and nourishing material for these relentlessly recurring Sundays. He forefancied appalling weeks, when no inspiration would visit him, and Saturday evening would arrive to find him still sermonless.

This youth had his theological training at a

time when the prophets of Israel had been recently rediscovered, and the prophetic element in religion was stressed almost to the exclusion of every other. It was said, as indeed it is still said, that preaching must be prophetic. A minister was to enter his pulpit and speak as Amos did at Bethel, or Isaiah at the royal court in Jerusalem. The preacher was to stand upon his watchtower or to enter into a secret place and wait, and then declare the oracles of God. But this embryonic divine felt that no utterance of his had been or was ever likely to be oracular. Occasionally he had things to say which he wished to say very much, and he could usually say them in a very few minutes, but they were not in the habit of coming to him periodically at seven-day intervals, nor in such measured abundance as to furnish him with a twenty-five- or thirty-minute sermon Sunday morning and evening, not to mention fragments that remained over to be served up at the weekly prayer-meeting.

The prophetic office of the Christian preacher has been grossly exaggerated. A preacher may prophesy on occasion; but Elijah, Amos and Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were not parish ministers. None of them preached statedly to the same congregation; most of them handled a very few aspects of truth. A Greater

than they was usually called Teacher, and it would be wiser for Christian preachers to strive to be worthy of that title. It would have helped the divinity student, of whom I have been speaking, had he been told that instead of seeking to exercise a prophetic ministry, he was to fit himself to be a teacher of religion.

A teacher plans a course of instruction; he does not select his subjects from day to day. He has an ideal of a man educated in his discipline. He asks himself what elements must enter into his teaching, what appreciations he must awaken, what information he must impart, what questions he must provoke, what purposes he must seek to instil. A preacher who would minister in the same pulpit for a quarter of a century, or for at least a decade, and would train a congregation in convictions and ideals, in methods of intercourse with the Unseen and in ways of serving the commonweal, must follow a similar educational system. This is not to say that a preacher will not be visited by unexpected and compelling inspirations, and given messages which must forthwith be delivered. Such visitations of the Spirit come—come with crises in the world's affairs or in the nation's life, come in an event that startles a community or in a happening to some of his people which burdens the minister's heart,

come in revealing experiences to the man himself. Then he cannot but prophesy. But even so it will probably not be oftener than once on the Sunday, and for the other "diet of worship" (to employ your old Scots' phrase), he will treat some other topic, and well for him if, as a wise and foresighted instructor, he have a theme to hand on which he can speak to his people informingly. Preachers may be given one or two glimpses of God and His will for men which come home to them with such cogency that they are constrained to prophesy them, and can do so repeatedly with inward satisfaction; but let a man beware lest the aspect of truth which is so congenial to him become a hobby, and instead of being rated as a prophet he be considered a bore. Prophets were never conspicuous for the comprehensiveness of their teaching, but rather for the intensity and iteration with which they dwelt on one subject. A preacher must try, so far as he can, to declare the whole counsel of God, and to interpret life in fellowship with Him in all its varied ranges to older and younger folk of many temperaments and conditions.

These lectures will treat incidentally the technique of preaching; their main object is to suggest to men standing on the threshold of the ministry the diverse elements which should enter into

pulpit instruction. If they were to have a text, it might be St. Paul's characterisation of his own ministry as "teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ," or our Lord's description of a Christian minister as a scribe (and it is surely worth noting that He spoke so encouragingly of a scribe, and did not bid him cease being a scribe and become Elijah or Jeremiah or John the Baptist)—a scribe who has been made a student to the kingdom of heaven and "bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." Such a scribe, a faithful scholar and instructor, is, I submit, better qualified to guide, edify and personally befriend a congregation, and lead its corporate effort to serve its community, for a long term of years, than a temperamental prophet, undoubted gifts of God as prophets are.

The scribe was the teacher of the Law, and while it is to be hoped that we have outgrown the legalistic conception of religion, and above all no longer regard the Bible as codified law for theology or ethics or ecclesiastical organization, the Christian preacher finds his chief source of material in the Scriptures. The literature within the covers of our Bible is the standard expression of the life with God into which we are to lead our people, and the minister who would have his

congregation possess the whole of their glorious inheritance will set himself year after year to explore with them the contents of the Scripture, trying not to pass by any of it which seems to have a message for him and them. He will be first and foremost an expository preacher.

There are some who feel that the taking of a text is a mere pulpit convention, or the survival of an outworn magical conception of the words of the Bible. But however a sermon arises in a man's mind—and many of them do not originate in texts—it is always the richer and more surely Christian for being well grounded in a passage of Scripture. A man may have in his mind some attitude towards life in his hearers which he wishes to correct. For example, they may have been caught in the current mental perplexity about religion and morals. They did not wish this state of blurred vision, but they have accepted it and now rather enjoy it because it faces them with no insistent obligations and permits them to relax and take life easily. He wishes to point out the perils of this mental and moral vagueness, and show them how with Christ there is always something clearly in sight. Well, let him take such a text as "The twilight that I desired hath been turned into trembling unto me." Let him point out how the hours after sunset in

Babylon, so prized by glare-wearied men and women, in which they enjoyed themselves on their balconies or house-tops, became in a siege the most dreaded hours of the day, when Elamites and Medes could push their assault undetected amid the shadows. There will be a distinct gain to his sermon, not only from the picturesqueness of the text, which will grip his hearers' attention; but also the details of the scene depicted by the prophet will amplify his own treatment of the modern situation, and the depth and tragedy and spiritual earnestness of the ancient Scripture will carry him further in his portrayal of the contemporary danger than he would otherwise be taken. And against that striking background of twilight he will present more effectively Christ as the Light of life.

Or he wishes to stir his people to a sense of civic obligation for the town in which they dwell. Instead of treating the subject as a topic, suppose he takes as a text the words with which the first evangelist brings Jesus back to Capernaum: "He came unto His own city." It was not the city of His birth, or of His patriotic aspiration; it was the town in which He found it most convenient to live in order to do His work—the practical motive which governs most dwellers in modern towns. That gives the sermon a begin-

ning which few men would have hit on for themselves. Then the preacher studies Jesus' civic service in Capernaum:—His immediate enlistment in its organized religion in the synagogue, His willingness to help in the house where He was a lodger (an obligation frequently overlooked), His accessibility to the calls of the city's needy, His going after those neglected by the religious folk—the publican Levi and his friends. Obviously what Jesus did in ancient Capernaum does not exhaust a modern citizen's responsibilities, and the preacher will not be confined to precedents stated in the Gospel narrative, but will point out what one with the conscience of Jesus will undertake in a city today. But the text and its context will have opened up some vistas the preacher might not have seen, and, starting with the example of Jesus, he will be kept to the same exalted ethical level throughout.

Or the preacher may have in mind that relatively large class today, particularly among university students and our more intelligent older folk, who having heard that religion is an experience, and, not having passed through any emotional crises and lacking the mystic sense, conclude that they possess no first-hand touch with the living God. Such persons occasionally come to a minister, asking, as a recent graduate of

Harvard came and asked me, "to put him next." He was a youth from a high-principled and reservedly devout family, who was himself patently loyal to truth, responsive to the beautiful, and keen of conscience. When he asked to be "put next," what could one reply but to ask him: "Have you ever got away from God, who is Truth and Beauty and Righteousness?" That conversation suggested a sermon to the numerous group of whom he was representative. His longing had been voiced by the patriarch of Uz: "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" and the question with which one wished to answer had been expressed in a psalmist's discovery of the inescapableness of God: "Whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" One could start from the modern instance and pass to these two classic expressions, and leave the two sentences to sum up and enforce the message.

Or suppose the preacher is struck with the lack of seriousness with which many of his people are taking their own life with God, and the censoriousness with which they criticise other forms of Christian thought and devotion that they regard as innovations. And suppose he asks himself where in the Bible is a similar situation faced, and he chooses for a text our Lord's judgment upon the religious leaders of His time when He

compares them to children playing at the serious pursuits of adult life: "Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation, and to what are they like? They are like unto children that sit in the market-place." Again the text not only sums up in memorable fashion the evil to which he would call his people's attention, but it also gives him his theme—"Playing at Religion"—and supplies him with several angles of attack upon the situation of which he probably would not otherwise have thought, and furnishes him with the word "childish" with which to rub in (and rubbing in is necessary for a malady of this sort) his remedy.

I shoot the hippopotamus with bullets made of platinum
Because if I use leaden ones, his hide is sure to flatten 'em.

Or the preacher may be eager to give the many painfully restricted persons among his hearers a Christian attitude towards their limitations. Suppose he commences with the half-pitiful, half-triumphant message with which St. Paul closes his letter to the Colossians: "Remember my bonds." What does the recollection of the apostle's bonds suggest in our handling of

ours? To begin with we shall be sure that they are genuine fetters and not elastic bands capable of being stretched by sufficiently resolute wrists. How marvellously Paul stretched the limitations of his Jewish upbringing and education! How skilfully he contrived to overleap barriers which would have seemed insuperable to others! Second, we shall accept our bonds as divinely appointed. Paul calls himself the prisoner of Christ. Third, we shall think not so much of what we are bound *from* as of what we are bound *to*. No doubt limitations are often mercies in keeping us from courses where we might be imperilled; but they are also always guides to divine duties. Paul's confinement which cut him off from travel, shut him in to write some of his most enriching letters. Does not remembering Paul's bonds afford us a very complete interpretation of the Christian treatment of limitations?

A text seems to me to have three uses:—

(1) It keeps a preacher in line with the historic spiritual past which he is seeking to continue. If within the ample range of the Biblical literature a preacher cannot find a text for what he wishes to say, the chances are that he is deviating from the historic faith of which he is a teacher.

(2) It sums up in striking and memorable

form the main point of his message. If his people carry away the text, they will have the essence of the sermon.

(3) It almost invariably enriches the sermon from the wealthy life with God in the Bible with suggestions which were not in the preacher's mind before.

Many of our sermons first occur to us through texts. Every preacher will do well to keep a note-book beside his Bible, and set down in it texts which reach out their hands from the pages of the Scriptures as he reads and lay hold on his mind and conscience. Let him give them a title, indicate whatever points in their treatment come to him at the time, and especially note any illustrations they suggest. A well-filled note-book of that sort will prevent him from wasting the early part of a week in hunting for a subject and a text, and enable him to begin his preparation promptly on a Tuesday morning. Further, subjects and texts have a way of not coming to us when we most eagerly look for them, but arrive unexpectedly in the leisure of our vacations or in the midst of our thoughts when we are busy at something else. They also have a way of vanishing into oblivion unless we enter them, and enter them at once, in some place where we can put our hand on them.

We would not make it a hard and fast rule that a sermon must commence with a text. For variety's sake it is well to preach occasionally without one, or to lead up to the text with an introductory paragraph—a very effective method if one starts with something contemporary and of immediate interest and links it with an historic religious experience—or the text may come as the climax rather than as the starting-point of the sermon. A preacher may omit a text not because he wishes to be unhampered by Scripture, but because he proposes to traverse more Scripture that can be conveniently found in a brief passage. He may be speaking on loyalty, and illustrate the theme by three Old Testament heroines:—the maiden who remains stedfast to her peasant lover when tempted to enter Solomon's palace—the heroine of one or more of the poems in the Song of Songs; Ruth faithful to a family obligation; Esther risking her life for the sake of her imperilled people. The three women embody three perennial loyalties:—to plighted troth, to kinsfolk, to fellow-countrymen. None of them is outspokenly religious; Ruth changes her god for the sake of her mother-in-law and in the Book of Esther God is not once named; but religion in all three instances is the atmosphere in which the loyalty is grown and

blossoms and fruits in noble fidelity. This is surely Scriptural preaching, although the convention of a text is dispensed with.

Nor will preaching upon texts chosen here and there open up in systematic fashion the wealth of religious experience enshrined in the Bible. In planning the work of a year let a preacher take a consecutive course or, better, several courses (for there is much to be said for not prolonging unduly one line of exposition, and eight or ten serial sermons are as a rule enough of one type of subject); and let him treat with some completeness the contents of a book, or the characters of a particular epoch or group, or the teaching of a prophet or an apostle. For example, suppose he selects St. Paul's circle of friends—a not infrequently treated subject—and a rich one, for it introduces us to men and women of varied ages and gifts and stations in life who served Christ in the formative day of His Church's history. The preacher will sketch how the friendship began, what experiences were shared, what each friend brought to the other and what together they accomplished for the cause of Christ. Such a course takes a congregation through several tracts of Paul's letters and of the Book of Acts rarely used as texts, furnishes them with vivid pictures of the personal

relations among those who led the first missionary campaigns, renders much more human and lovable the apostle whose writings sometimes seem to them abstract and involved, and above all reveals what comradeship may mean among those who share the faith and purpose of Christ and with whom He is Himself a present and controlling Friend.

Or suppose he arranges courses, as hosts of his predecessors have, in the questions which are asked on the pages of the Gospels. I say these are not novel courses, and indeed why should a preacher seek novelty when there is so much ignorance of the contents and meaning of the Bible, and the well-worn highways serve to show where preachers have found the most rewarding material? The cult of novelty in the pulpit may easily deprive a congregation of the great staple experiences of the Christian faith. Let a man look at the familiar passages with his own eyes, and interpret them in the light of his own observation and experience, and they will come with sufficiently fresh meaning and power to hold his most seasoned hearers' attention and win home to their hearts and consciences. And there is something about the direct questions recorded by the evangelists which make them peculiarly pointed texts and unerring guides to the essen-

tials of Christian thought and life. One must never forget that the gospels are history written from Christian experience to produce Christian experience. Questions play a large rôle in the life of the spirit of man.

There is a wealthy course of sermons in the questions put to Jesus: "Why hast Thou thus dealt with us?" "Comest Thou to me?" "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?" "Are there few that be saved?" "What lack I yet?" "Whence should we have so many loaves in a desert place?" "Why could we not cast it out?" "Goest Thou thither again?" "How long dost Thou hold us in suspense?" "Lord, what is come to pass that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us and not unto the world?" How patently these questions, those from the more objective synoptists no less than those from the Fourth Gospel, voice recurring spiritual problems! How directly they lead a preacher to handle vital personal religion—something from which many preachers all too frequently get away. What ample material of the first importance lies at his disposal for the sermon in Jesus' answer!

There is an even more heart-searching course in the questions put by Jesus: "How is it that ye *sought* Me? Wist ye not?" "Why are ye

fearful?" "How long shall I bear with you?" "Wouldest thou be made whole?" "Seest thou aught?" "Sayest thou this of thyself?" "Why callest thou Me good?" and the question He wished them to put: "None of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou?" Expository preaching runs a risk of seeming to deal with the past; but the questions on Jesus' lips seem spoken today. They would probably not have found a place on the pages of the evangelists had they not kept sounding in some disciple's memory as His unseen Master still dealt with him. They remain phrases through which He seems to deal immediately with us now.

Or take a course in the questions asked concerning Jesus: "Whence hath this Man these things?" "Why troublest thou the Master any further?" "Who then is this?" "What sayest thou of Him?" "Wherefore would ye hear it again? Would ye also become His disciples?" "Whither will this Man go that we shall not find Him?" "What think ye? that He will not come to the feast?" (A text by the way which readily lends itself to a Communion Sermon.) The questions quoted only begin to open up these fruitful veins of ore. There is material for at least a half-dozen courses in Gospel questions and answers.

When a preacher attempts to take up the contents of one of the longer books, he is often at a loss to know how to divide the material into portions which can be profitably handled in a single sermon. Neither the editors of the historical books nor the writers of epistles moved from topic to topic with clear and proportionate chapters. The preacher must analyse the book, set down the ideals or convictions illustrated and the main subjects dealt with, discard those which seem to have less present value, and select a number of salient points. In the historical books he may follow Thomas Carlyle's method and concentrate upon the characters. These are happily sketched for a preacher's purpose, not often with an attempt to appraise their significance for Israel's development or to offer an unprejudiced judgment of their abilities or achievements, but as ideals of piety and virtue to be emulated or as types of faithlessness to be shunned. In the epistles there are lines of reasoning more cogent to first-century readers than to us, and some topics are handled that will seem remote to a modern congregation. Expository preaching can be made dull by the man who does not know how to omit. There are some chapters where a subordinate point is of more practical present interest than the apostle's main line of

thought. For example, in First Corinthians, when Paul writes of marriage and divorce and remarriage, he is scarcely on the level of his own highest ideals, and this is not an inspiring Scripture from which to draw for our congregations the Christian conception of wedded love. But it is a most suggestive chapter from which to study St. Paul's view of his own authority and assurance as an interpreter of the mind of God. He carefully distinguishes three degrees of authority in what he writes:—that for which he can give the warrant of Jesus' explicit teaching, that which he states on his own authority and of which his Christian conscience makes him very sure, and that which he offers merely as his deliberately arrived-at opinion. There is perhaps no better chapter from which to point out the degrees of authority which the writers of the Bible themselves recognised and the consequent folly of placing all Scripture on the same plane. One may deal merely incidentally with the subject of marriage, frankly granting the apostle's limitations, due perhaps to the character of those to whom he was writing, and use this passage to exalt Christ as Lord of the Scripture, whose Spirit alone can guide us in its interpretation.

But it is scarcely necessary for me to go more into detail in suggesting the expository treat-

ment of the varied types of literature to be found in the Bible. Indeed, it seems impertinent for a preacher of any other land to offer advice to Scotsmen, for no preachers have surpassed your own in this field. "Time makes ancient good uncouth," and no man can be a mere imitator of Bruce and Dods, of Denney and Sir George Adam Smith. Let me merely beg of you, not only for the sake of your own congregations, but for the sake of the rest of the English-speaking world, to continue their tradition, and to enrich your generation with such examples of scholarly and intensely practical exposition.

My own country is in the throes of a belated theological controversy due to the persistence of an obsolete and unprotestant view of Biblical inerrancy. Like most controversies it has focused on a single point, the Virgin Birth of our Lord, which Fundamentalists hold to be essential to a faith in His Divinity. Simple expository preaching, showing what the New Testament teaches and where its emphasis lies, seems the corrective to this unscriptural exaggeration. Take the eight portraits of Christ in the New Testament Canon—that in the early preaching recorded in the first chapters of the Book of Acts, that of St. Paul, of St. Mark, of St. Matthew, of St. Luke, that in the Epistle to the Hebrews,

in the Apocalypse and in the Fourth Gospel. Ask of each: Against what background does it paint Christ's figure? What details of His career are portrayed? What are omitted? What are stressed? How does the writer account for Christ's uniqueness? How does he relate Him to God? How does he connect Him with man? Where does he locate Him? What was the contribution of this portrait to faith when it was first given to the Church? What is its present worth for Christians? A congregation is frankly surprised to note the differences of these New Testament pictures, astonished at the ommissions, puzzled perhaps at the Apocalyptic Christ or at the slighting of the earthly career of Jesus in the early preaching and in St. Paul, and made to see that features which any New Testament writer omitted cannot be exalted to a place of primary importance. It becomes apparent that in the New Testament there are four explanations of the origin of our Lord's Divine power: the anointing with the Spirit at the Baptism, the miraculous birth of the Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the spiritual ancestry reaching back in the one genealogy through David to Abraham and in the other to Adam "the son of God," the eternal existence of the Word with the Father who became flesh or the Man from heaven exist-

ing in the form of God who emptied Himself to assume a servant's form and be made in the likeness of fleshly men. One cannot argue too much from silence, but one may point out that no New Testament writer combines pre-existence and miraculous birth, which apparently were, to start with, two different explanations of our Lord's uniqueness. And such a course should also make plain that all the portraits present a Divine Lord, that they agree in the manner of Spirit He is of and the life He offers sinning men, and in His transforming power as Saviour of the world. The best corrective of wrong views of the Bible is to present the teaching of the Bible itself in its own proportions. We should not be in the deplorable plight in which we find ourselves in the American churches today, with widespread ignorance of the contents of the Bible and this literalistic view of it as a divinely dictated volume, had we possessed more preachers who systematically taught their people from the Scriptures, availing themselves of current scholarship.

Courses of sermons upon the contents of the Bible give a preacher an incentive to devote himself to study and to master the best books on the particular section of the Scriptures which he is treating. They safeguard him from too subjec-

tive preaching, forever looking within and writing from his own soul, instead of exploring the larger social heritage of the Christian community. They enable him to be forehanded in his preparation, with some of his material ready several weeks or months in advance, and with a theme on which he can proceed to make his outline and write his notes as soon as he sits down to his desk Tuesday forenoon, should his other sermon not yet have taken shape in his mind. They will assure variety in his preaching, for they will lead him over a wide range of topics. What preacher, who gives a series of sermons on the Ten Commandments, for instance, is not taken to large tracts of duty to which he would never have thought of leading his people apart from the guidance of these ancient principles? Incidentally such courses will furnish him texts and material for many future sermons in necessarily discarded or cursorily handled passages, and in the related Scriptures which any part of the Bible thoroughly studied always suggests.

Expository preaching is not without its dangers. One is that of seeming to be dealing with the past rather than the present life of God in the world. Preachers are apt to start with the situation in the passage of Scripture. It is better to begin with something contemporary, and

then relate that to the historic treatment of a similar matter in the Bible. For example, if one is preaching on the First Commandment, which sounds remote from modern life, for few persons think themselves liable to worship several divinities, he may begin: "Were this commandment being given today, it might read 'Thou shalt have at least one God.'" This creates an assurance that the preacher is not concerned with ancient history. Then, after a paragraph or two on the necessity of worshipping some God, the preacher can go on to show that, while nominally we recognise one only, we readily slip back into polytheism, acknowledging the God of love in the home and the God of selfishness in business, the God of comradeship among men of our own class or nation or race and a very different deity in our relations with those of another class or nation or race.

At times a man may so employ an incident or saying in Scripture as to suggest from the very start that he is thinking of contemporary conditions. Take such a scene as that where Ezekiel sees the elders turning their backs on the temple and worshipping the sun. That can easily be so handled as to make a congregation feel that the preacher is describing the cult of Naturalism to be found widely today among those reared to

adore the spiritual God of conscience and of redemption. Or a preacher may commence with the shipwreck in the 27th Chapter of Acts, and use Paul's words to the centurion concerning the sailors, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved," to suggest at once that he has in mind the danger of some men's leaving or being put off the ship today, and current discussions will aid his hearers to recognise what ship he is thinking of—the Church or an industry or an international fellowship. Whether he commences with a current situation or makes the Scripture passage an obvious interpretation of present conditions, the preacher must from the opening sentence convey the impression that he and his listeners are face to face with God in today.

A second danger is discursiveness. Allusion has already been made to the difficulty to be found in the Biblical material. St. Paul's mind goes off down side-tracks, and then returns to the main route of his argument. The editors of Old Testament books introduce unrelated matters, and such a book as Isaiah or Jeremiah has no chronological or topical or any other order whatsoever. The preacher who takes up a book and proceeds from sentence to sentence or from paragraph to paragraph is sure to ramble, for

the Bible itself, in its present form, frequently rambles. The distinction often made between topical and textual sermons is invalid; a sermon should be both. It should have a subject, and, like every other artistic creation—picture or play or musical composition—it should obey the canon of unity. And it should be scriptural in that it finds the subject's classic statement or illustration in the volume which is the standard of God's life with men. Suppose the preacher, like thousands of his predecessors, be placing side by side the narratives of Babel and of Pentecost, his subject is obviously "Causes of Discord and of Unity." Let him stick to that theme throughout, and comment on no detail of either incident which does not bear directly upon it. Or he is trying to cover the career and message of a prophet in a series of sermons. Let him group the material under his own captions: Isaiah the Preacher, the Poet, the Statesman, the Theologian, the Herald of Hope. The Biblical writers were not thinking of the convenience of preachers who should use their literary output. They have left us a quarry whence we must select the stones we need and, shaping them for ourselves, build them into an edifice of convictions and ideals for the spirits of the men of our time.

A third danger is lack of directness. A

preacher may feel that an adequate and objective statement of the Biblical teaching makes its pointed application to his hearers impossible. But the preacher must never be lost in the historian. Suppose he is handling the little appended parable of the guest who entered the marriage feast without providing himself with a wedding garment. It is possible to go off into details of Palestinian marriage festivities in the First Century, and amplify them with anecdotes from more recent travellers in the Holy Land, or to discuss the religious tendencies of Jesus' time and determine what group He may have had in mind when He spoke. Let the preacher ask himself: Of what sort of man was Jesus thinking? Thoughtless—he went in without considering to what he was invited; self-assured—confident that in any clothes he would grace the occasion; distrustful—not really believing that he was invited to a royal marriage-feast, and so not seriously making the requisite preparations. Let him drive home those three points of thoughtlessness, self-assurance, and distrust of the Gospel, in men's treatment of God's gracious invitation today.

Or the preacher may feel that he must be both an objective historical expositor and a teacher of living religion. So he devotes the first part of his discourse to a dispassionate statement of the Bib-

lical teaching in the light of the thought of its day, and the second part to an application of it to present conditions. This method is occasionally justified, indeed is sometimes unavoidable; but it does not make the most effective preaching. It is a combination of a lecture on Biblical theology, not very gripping to the average congregation, and of a brief homily delivered when the interest of the hearers has been dulled, if not completely lost. The truth should be applied as one goes along, and applied from the first paragraph to the last. This need not be done by direct exhortations or appeals, although these have their place, but the people should always be aware that the preacher is speaking of the living God in His immediate dealings with His children.

A fourth difficulty lies in the treatment of the miraculous. Most of us believe in a God who surprises us by doing wondrous things, so that we cannot confine Him within man's discoveries of His usual ways. But we realize that in Bible days men's outlook upon nature and history was so different from ours that we cannot accept their explanations of occurrences as identical with our own. Some preachers discard altogether passages in which the miraculous is prominent on the ground that they do not feel intellectually honest in employing them. Others use them, but give

the impression of being ill at ease with them. Others, again, to the bewilderment of some of their hearers, use them as though they were handling a matter-of-fact modern history. The pulpit is usually not the place to deal with the question of the historicity of any Biblical narrative. That can be done, when necessary, more wisely in a less formal meeting where there can be discussion and the give and take of question and answer. In any case the preacher is not urging his hearers to attempt to reproduce the miraculous experience in its literal form, but he is trying to state the spiritual principle, illustrated in the Biblical account, and to induce his listeners to live by it. No preacher, for instance, wishes his congregation to seek a repetition of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes; but he is eager for them to believe that when available resources, however meagre, are placed at Christ's disposal, they are marvellously used to meet human need. He finds the details of the gospel accounts all helpful as illustrations of the working out of this essential principle.

This treatment of the miraculous is as old as the New Testament itself—witness our Fourth Gospel. This evangelist has in his tradition, for example, the raising of Lazarus from the grave. Doubtless he found no difficulty with it as historic

fact; but in his use of it he is obviously not interested in proving the fact, but in citing it to present Christ as the resurrection and the life. The modern preacher may not feel that he knows exactly what lies behind the tradition in many of the Biblical miracles, but he knows that generations of believers have tested the spiritual laws which these narratives illustrate in the world-view of their day, and illustrate with incomparable vividness and power. Let him use them for that purpose, and make plain in his treatment of them that this is his dominant aim. The historic question of what actually happened and exactly how it happened will not be raised because it is lost in the religious question of finding an all-sufficient God for our present necessities, and working with Him for their fulfilment in accordance with our conceptions of His ways in nature and the soul of man.

The emphasis of this lecture upon expository preaching may seem to some a survival from a day when the Bible was viewed quite differently than we regard it now. One learns that even crude and fantastic doctrines are not to be thrown aside as worthless, but considered exaggerations of a truth to be remembered. But for that they would not have thriven and commanded the allegiance of devout and thoughtful Christians. Our

present conception of the Bible surely does not render it any the less the spiritually selected and spiritually approved literary record of God's progressive Self-disclosure in that history which culminated in Christ and the founding of the Church, and which abides, when read under the guidance of Christ's Spirit, the standard of faith and life. Every book in it is a survivor from a rigorous struggle, and lives on because generation after generation of God-seekers find through it fellowship with Him and are found through it by Him. Our historical criticism enables us to appreciate the variety of spiritual experience which has found expression in these manifold literary forms. Here is just the assorted material we need for the heterogeneous spiritual types to whom we try to preach. The relatively greater freedom with which we handle the Bible, not hesitating to distinguish sub-Christian from Christian elements, less and more valuable religious experiences enshrined in this volume, and to discriminate between the religious experience and the form in which it is pictured, enables us to use each for what it is worth and to make these ancient discoveries of God accessible to modern men and women. The longer one lives with the Bible and the further one penetrates its heights and depths and lengths and breadths, and the

longer one uses it as the source whence to draw inspirations for the spiritual transformation and upbuilding of those committed to him, the more one appreciates its exhaustless and perennially vital supplies.

We have been speaking of expository preaching as though the preacher's function were to interpret the Bible; we might more truly say that it is to interpret life by the Bible. Recall Peter's expository sermon at Pentecost. Here were men undergoing a novel and overwhelming experience. How explain it? "This is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel." The ancient Scripture makes plain the contemporary experience: "This is that." So the Bible throws light on all that befalls men, on temptation and sin and pain and loss and death, on love and friendship and success and far-flying hope, on the mysterious comings to us and dealings with us from the vast Beyond or the depths Within.

A preacher who has faced a congregation at least twice on a Sunday for more than a quarter of a century, with few intervening weeks in which he was not confronted with several groups to be taught the things of the Spirit, often grows tired of his own mind with its stale and pathetically restricted range of thought, only occasionally finds contemporary books and associates spiritually

enriching, and again and again feels himself mentally bankrupt. And here are these importunate and expectant friends on their puzzling and straining journey through the world rapping at his door, and he with nothing to set before them. Happily he has the food and drink of these believers of the olden time, food and drink which thousands through the centuries have found nourishing and refreshing. Let him confidently turn to the Bible, and make himself an appetizing purveyor of its bread and wine of God.

We began with a plea for the much-abused scribe. The scribe came into disrepute because men felt that he lacked that glowing personal religious experience which empowered the prophet. No man can interpret a scripture save as he shares in some degree the experience which the scripture enshrines. In our American railway stations there is a functionary who with the aid of a megaphone announces outgoing trains, naming their destinations and stops and the track where they may be boarded. On an oppressive summer day one will hear the announcer in a city terminal calling to the waiting travellers the enticing names of mountain and seaside resorts and summoning them to entrain. But the announcer himself will stay in the sweltering station, without glimpse of forest or ocean, without a breath of

their quickening air, and his lifelong he will not likely visit more than half a dozen of the places which he mentions glibly several times a day. God forbid that you and I should spend our lives telling the experiences of prophet and law-giver, psalmist and sage on the heights of vision and in the secret places of comfort and of power, and the experiences of disciples in the presence of incarnate God, and be ourselves strangers to the everlasting hills, and aliens to the heart and conscience of Jesus Christ.

LECTURE II

DOCTRINAL PREACHING

LECTURE II

DOCTRINAL PREACHING

THE preacher who would teach religion must give his people an interpretation of God's life with men; he must preach doctrine. For a generation or longer there has been a widespread complaint against theology in the pulpit; and preachers have yielded to the clamour with disastrous results. We have an ill-informed Church, often ignorant of, and groping after, fellowship with the Invisible. The cry has been: "Give us practical sermons, not theology." But nothing is so practical as doctrine of the right kind. Back of all our helps to healthy and capable living—inoculations which immunise from disease, a synthesis of chemicals which yields a dye or a new metal, the structure of a craft that navigates the air—lie correct interpretations of the forces of which our world is built up. Such interpretations are never regarded as final; they are revised and amplified from time to time, with resultant improvements in the applications made of them for utilitarian ends. Explanations of the spiritual universe—of God and His purpose, His

redeeming love, His empowering presence, of man and his temptations, his sin, his salvation, his reinforcements, his discipline, his destiny, are of even more value for vigorous and victorious life. Such explanations are never final or complete, but they confer inestimable gifts and graces.

We agree today that theology and religion are not identical, that religion precedes and is far more important than theology, and that doctrines are man's attempts, always provisional, to rationalise his experiences of God. But it is also true that theology enriches religion, that expectation makes possible experience, and that to teach doctrine which sets forth what God is and does opens doors into ampler life with Him. St. Paul found a group of earnest men at Ephesus who were followers of John the Baptist, but knew nothing of the possession of the Spirit. Their expectation restricted their experience; their meagre theology limited their religion. When he explained to them Jesus and the Spirit given to believers in Him, their life was enlarged. Their new experience at once found expression, and characteristic First Century expression, for there are fashions in religious forms: "They spake with tongues and prophesied." That incident may serve for an introductory sermon in a course on Christian doctrine. For are there not many in

our time like these men baptised into John's baptism? Religion to them means an effort to do good and to be good. A favourite text is James' statement of pure religion: "to visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction and to keep one's self unspotted from the world." They forget that James begins: "Pure religion and undefiled *before our God and Father.*" He would have no sympathy with the godless religion at present common. Religion is primarily neither doing good nor being good, but being connected with Someone with whom we do far better things and become far better men and women than is possible by ourselves. A preacher must teach what Christian fellowship with the Unseen is, what believers find in their relations with God, how communion with Him is established and maintained.

That is doctrinal preaching; and it should form a large part annually of a minister's pulpit teaching. There are not a few thinking persons who stay away from church services on the ground that, when they attend, they learn nothing. We are surfeited with what are termed "inspirational sermons"—exhortations with a maximum of heat and a minimum of light. They are popular with that large number of people who are mentally sluggish and fancy that they do not wish to be made to think, and who enjoy

being warmed up to their more arduous duties. As a matter of fact, many of them discover that thinking is a delightful exercise when they are pushed to it. Although usually unaware of it, they want instruction, and a most sorely needed element in that instruction is an interpretation of God's relations with and reinforcements of man. Cults, like Christian Science, owe their vogue in large measure to their teaching of connections to be made with Life and Goodness beyond man's own, and their specific teaching of how these may be established, with a technique of intercourse with the Infinite. Roman Catholicism instructs its adherents in the dogmas and requirements of that Church, so that even the very ignorant among them have some distinct beliefs. Protestant Christendom is suffering from vagueness in its thought of religion, from lack of positive convictions and ideals. Doubtless at this point a religion of spiritual freedom is apt to be at a disadvantage with a religion of external authority. We Protestant preachers have a difficult task in teaching doctrine, for we must think out for ourselves in terms of our time an interpretation of our spiritual heritage, and help our people to a like intellectual effort. But thinking for one's self has always been the glory of Protestant Christians and is surely the obligation of adult

sons and daughters of God. Part, and no small part, of the object of our public worship is to make us think. Dr. Lyman Beecher wrote to one of his sons: "Have one sermon a week that will tax your intellect and the intellect of your hearers." And Horace Bushnell told a company of divinity students: "There cannot be much preaching worthy of the name where there is no thinking. Preaching is nothing but the bursting out of light, which has first burst in or up from where God is, among the soul's foundations."

The complaints against doctrinal preaching are really protests against faulty or dull methods of presenting the great Christian convictions. The pulpit is often a generation behind theological lecture-rooms, and even where ministers hold a modern view of the Bible, we find some of them still deducing doctrine from proof-texts of Scripture. They do not attempt to get at the experience which the Biblical writers were trying to interpret in the forms of thought current in their day, and to make clear that we share their experience, and, like them, must explain it in ways congruous with our own thinking. They do not discriminate between those Biblical terms which we can still employ or adapt, and those which do not fit into present conceptions of the universe.

Suppose a preacher is following the main fes-

tivals of the Christian Year (a most valuable practice compelling him to treat annually the main themes of the Christian revelation), and he comes to the Ascension of Christ. Here one has the Biblical conception of a flat earth with the heaven above it, and the levitation of our Lord, presumably in physical form, through a cloud into the skies to a place at God's right hand. As poetry this is picturesque, and one feels it not inappropriate in hymns for ascensiontide. But treated as prose, it is impossible for any thoughtful man. A preacher must point out that Jesus had made such an impression upon those who knew Him that they felt that no place in the universe was too exalted for Him. They had become aware of His intimacy with God, and were sure that where God is and whatever He is doing, there also Jesus shares His life and work. They pictured God as enthroned in the skies and as dwelling in believing hearts. They could not think of Jesus as separate from Him. He was enthroned above all worlds. He was in closest comradeship with His loyal followers. One need not dwell on the differences between the Biblical thought and our own, and certainly one ought not to speak in superior fashion of theirs as childish. Our view of the universe will seem crude a century hence; but one must bridge the interval be-

tween First Century thought and ours by carrying over the abiding conviction of the lordship of Jesus. Then one may go on to some meanings which the ascension had for them, which we also need:—It freed their thought of Jesus from local limitations and gave Him a cosmic setting rendering Him universal and contemporary. It Christianised their thought of God, for they conceived Him as doing nothing of which Jesus was not the willing partner. It made the universe more homelike, for there was no remotest spot in it where Jesus was not present and potent. It held up an ideal for the Church—to witness in its teaching and organisation and life to His supremacy, and to bring the kingdoms of the world under His sway.

Or suppose the preacher is ambitious enough to attempt to present in a single sermon a doctrine of the Person of Christ. Here three elements have to be considered:—history, faith and reflection. We have Christ as a fact in the world's career, Christ as a force in believing hearts, Christ as a creed in Christian minds. The three headings may help to make clear where men may differ in their thought of Him and find themselves one in loyalty. And they may do something as well to banish some of the differences. There is first the historic fact of this Life,

which produced the religion of the New Testament. Without discussing whether everything recorded of Jesus occurred exactly as it is reported (and what two reports of any occurrence today agree in all details or are accurate in every particular?), here is an indisputable basis in history: Jesus of Nazareth was such an one as to create the religious impression of Him found in our New Testament. Each age selects from that impression what most appeals to it. Today we are likely to be caught by His singular intimacy with God, His singular character of unfailing love, His singular victory over the world and sin and death. But, second, Christ is never a fact to be studied dispassionately: He challenges all who approach Him to follow Him, and if we follow we find ourselves sharing His fellowship with the Unseen, adoring His character, drawing from His victory power to like triumphs. Here all Christians are at one in their experience of new life in Him. Then, third, we come to reflect on this experience and ask ourselves what it means. We cannot help using our own ways of thinking, but even so there is much in which the ten thousand times ten thousand of Christendom agree. We agree with Jesus Himself that He is God's Son, in unique comradeship with the Invisible. We agree with His first interpreters that in Him

we see manifest the God we worship and the Man each of us would fain become. We agree that He is the Saviour and Lord of life. There are questions which have been raised from the earliest times until now, questions of His origin, of the combination of Divine and human in Him, of the explanation of how His victory avails for us, which have been variously answered throughout the ages. They deserve study, but the devoutest and wisest Christians may disagree in answering them, and still find in Jesus the Representative of God, Himself the symbol of the Highest we worship and the ideal we seek to follow, and Himself the Giver of power to conquer fear and evil and death.

Such distinctions which discriminate between fact and interpretation, between religion and theology, are essential to helpful doctrinal preaching.

A second mistake is to deaden interest by employing technical language, or language which has been worn threadbare. For example, Justification by Faith is a grand, historic phrase which has practically no connotation to the average member of our congregations. We may use as a synonym Forgiveness, or Adjustment by Trust, and convey a considerable part of the historic inheritance, and clarify the main point which

we are interested in stressing. Dr. Marcus Dods used to say that the principal words in the religious vocabulary become so worn in time by usage as to lose their precise measures of spiritual value; and that they ought to be called in after a generation and withdrawn from circulation; after a lapse of years they might be reminted and reissued. To speak of "original sin" does not mean much to our people, but the same thing is playing a phenomenal rôle with our psychologists under the label of the subconscious with its racial instincts or the *libido,* which, in the current jargon, must be "sublimated." One is not saying that the contemporary vocabulary is one whit better than the old one; it often seems clumsier and less euphonious; but one cannot do business in a generation, any more than within the sovereignty of a nation, without exchanging our symbols of value for its own current coin. It is the preacher's task to discover synonyms for the spiritual treasures which he has come to classify under their ancient denominations and put them in circulation in terms which at once suggest their worth.

A third method of doctrinal preaching open to objection starts either with the Scriptures or with the historic formulation, and then proceeds to set forth its present significance and apply it to

life under modern conditions. This is never as adroit and effective as to commence with living faith and interpret its implications. Suppose a preacher wishes to connect the Trinitarian conception of God with contemporary life and make plain that it conserves and interprets immediately valuable elements in the Church's historic faith. He may begin with democracy, an ideal in which most of his hearers profess to believe, and ask, What is the religious faith on which our conception of democracy rests? A threefold faith—faith in the capacities of the common man, faith in the inherent and self-evidencing power of ideals, faith in the universe as friendly to human brotherhood. It is a faith which is lightly assumed by all our dreamers of and toilers for social progress. Is it justified? It is certainly open to challenge. Men, as we know them, are selfish and lazy and often very stupid. There are moods in which we are tempted to call them, with Frederick the Great, *diese verdammte Rasse,* or to speak of them, as Carlyle did of the population of Britain, as "mostly fools." The disillusionment which has supervened upon the Great War has led to cynicism and a disparagement of humanity. Nor do ideals appear to be immediately victorious. The best of them are sure of repeated defeat. Shrewd men of the world pooh-

pooh them as too good to come true. And as for the universe, our human race is located upon one of the more diminitive planets in the illimitable regions of space, a planet where scientists tell us that for the time being the glaciers have retreated, leaving the largest part of the globe habitable, but for which they also predict a return of the ice when the teeming millions of its dwellers will be pushed into ever narrower confines with a subsequent struggle for survival which will make any past war seem a trifling skirmish. Ultimately this planet is destined to be as cold and dead as the moon, and all the doings of its busy denizens will be buried beneath its thick frozen mantle and lost in oblivion. What incentive is there to labour for a perfected human society

If every man die for ever, if all his griefs are in vain,
And the homeless planet at length will be wheel'd thro' the silence of space,
Motherless evermore of an ever-vanishing race,
When the worm shall have writhed its last, and its last brother-worm shall have fled
From the dead fossil skull that is left in the rocks of an earth that is dead?

On what, then, can our faith in democracy be based? On the Christian God. We believe in

the capacities of the common man, not because we find men so capable, but because a plain Man, a carpenter, in a village in an obscure corner of the world of His day, a member of a subject race, embodied the fulness of God, and in Him all others, least, last and lowest, may be made full. We believe in the might of ideals akin to His, not because we see them everywhere triumphant; on the contrary they are despised and rejected, crucified and buried. But we do not consider them projections of man's aspirations, but the Breath of the Almighty in man, destined to rise from the tombs where selfishness confines them and to conquer by the very crosses to which they have been nailed. We believe that this universe is friendly to brotherhood, not because we dispute the scientists' account of the evolution and probable destiny of our planet, but because for us its Creator and Lord is the God and Father of Jesus Christ, who is responsible for His children, and will see to it that here or somewhere else we all have enough and to spare, provided we work for it and share it after His just and loving will. And this threefold faith in God as incarnate in the Man Christ Jesus, as the Spirit inspiring Christian ideals, as the Father of our race and Controller of the universe, is summed up in the Trinity—Son, Spirit, Father, one living God.

The preacher has begun with a current assumption, and interpreted the religious basis upon which it can rest.

Or suppose the preacher wishes to present the character and power of God. It is a theme which needs frequent treatment, for a Christian conception of God is by no means common and notions of His might are still allowed to efface His goodness, or notions of His goodness are disconnected from His might. This topic is often handled by a brief survey of man's thought of Deity from primitive times to the full-orbed disclosure in Jesus. Such perspectives of the development of the object of man's worship may be instructive; but they assume more historical interest than most congregations possess, and they savour more of the lecture-room than of the pulpit. The preacher in the brief space allotted him wants to keep his hearers face to face with their greatest Contemporary. Suppose he begins by asking: If we could choose the God we think our world ought to have, what would He be like? He would be powerful enough to control it, and good enough to direct it to loving ends. Is not this the God whom Christianity offers us? See Him described in words put upon the lips of Jesus by an evangelist in his account of the conversation in the Upper Room: "He that hath seen Me

hath seen the Father," and "The Father is greater than I." The Christian God is like Jesus and greater. Then let the preacher develop his two points—God's Christlikeness with all that this means at the core of the universe and every touch of its life upon us; God's greatness, comprising that force and life and truth and beauty and goodness to which we are led along all the paths of our being, so that Christ defines but does not confine our thought of God, and adoring Him in Jesus we also with Jesus worship Him as Lord of heaven and earth. The preacher starts with an acknowledged desire and shows how the God of Christian faith fully satisfies it.

Some may think that both in the previous lecture and today too much regard is paid to the start of a sermon. It has been part of the present lecturer's annual duty now for many years to preach in University chapels where the attendance of undergraduates is required. One cannot take for granted an avid interest in one's hearers, and obviously one must not be overlong. Mr. Hadley, the former president of Yale, used to say to the university preacher: "You may preach half an hour, but no souls are saved after twenty minutes." To which I have replied: "One may keep on safely and savingly for half an hour provided one nails down their attention

in the first minute." The approach shot is momentous. The late Dr. Sparhawk Jones, of Baltimore and Philadelphia, was once preaching in the Princeton pulpit, and read for his text Hazael's words to Elisha: "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" He closed the Bible, and began: "Dog or no dog, he did it;" and proceeded to preach upon the superiority of first to second thoughts in moral decisions—the theme of Bishop Butler's famous sermon on Balaam. That opening sentence gave him his listeners, and really gave them his message. One is not pleading for the sensational, but for the arresting. It is particularly necessary to have a gripping start when one is going to make a congregation think hard on some august doctrine of the Christian faith.

Still another necessity is telling illustration. Doctrinal sermons, more than any other kind of preaching, are liable to be heavy in language. It was to carry home His doctrine that Jesus employed parables. They are packed with theology, but theology in pictures. He found analogies for the kingdom of God in soil and seed and leaven and in the doings of men. The preacher of doctrine must follow His method. Take so abstract a theme as the Trinity of which we were speaking a moment ago, and no matter

how carefully a preacher picks simple words, his people will carry away little unless he packs his message into a simile. Of course the simile is no argument and must not be made to do duty for clear exposition. Nor must any simile be carried too far; the parables of Jesus, by pressing their details, have been interpreted to mean what He never intended them to convey. But illustrate we must. Scientific discovery suggests one analogy to the religious discovery we try to express in the Trinity. In 1868 Sir Norman Lockyer, with the help of the spectroscope, discovered a new gas flaming up in certain parts of the sun, a gas unlike any known on earth, so he gave it the name of helium. In 1895 Sir William Ramsay discovered the same element in some of the tubes with which he was conducting experiments in his laboratory, but it was considered an extremely rare element. The Great War brought an urgent demand for a non-inflammable gas for use in airships, and helium was known to have this property. It was discovered in fairly large quantities in certain wells in Texas and in Utah, and 150,000 cubic feet of it were on the wharves in New York, awaiting shipment, when the Armistice was signed. Today it is in use in practically all the dirigible vessels which navigate the air. You have already caught the an-

alogy. Men had discovered One unlike themselves in holiness, the Most High. They spoke of Him as Divine or the Father in heaven in contradistinction to human and earthly. Then in Jesus they found the Divine at their side, God in man, the heavenly moving abroad in the life of earth. When His bodily presence was withdrawn, they made the further discovery that the Divine, the Holy Spirit, was manifest in the corporate life of believers in Jesus, was an indwelling Presence with whom they could work and who worked in and through them mightily.

Or if he be handling the Person of Christ, with its two aspects—the religious experience of the Man Jesus and the incarnation of God in Him—there is an analogy in the present scientific explanation of light. A few years ago we were taught that light consisted of waves moving in a hypothetical ether; light, as Lord Kelvin cleverly put it, was "the nominative of the verb to undulate." More recently it has been discovered that light exerts a pressure which can be weighed, and we can speak of the number of tons of sunlight per annum received by our earth. This is very like Sir Isaac Newton's emanation theory. Both theories seem to be needed to account for light. Sir William Bragg writes:

On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays we used the wave theory; on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays we think in streams of flying energy, quanta or corpuscles. That is, after all, a very proper attitude to take. We cannot state the whole truth, since we have only partial statements, covering a portion of the field. When we want to work in any one portion of the field or other, we must take out the right map. Some day we shall piece all the maps together.

So Jesus is to us at times a Man like ourselves receiving by faith fellowship with God, and at times the embodiment of God Himself in whose pressure upon our life we feel the Heart and Conscience of the Eternal.

A picturesque text may be of great assistance, and you have surely noted already that doctrinal preaching is not being set over against expository preaching. If a preacher be handling the supposedly most speculative doctrine of the Trinity, he might set out with the text: "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." The word "dwelling" is suggestive. One never knows what a house is like until one lives in it. One never knows what God is like until one lives in Him. Probably God never seemed home to His children until they discovered that He is one

and friendly. Ask a Korean Christian, with his background of devil worship, what most appeals to him in his new faith, and he will almost surely say: "That I have to do with one God only and that He is good." Then let the preacher stress the Divine unity, for (as was said last time) we are still unwittingly polytheists, and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in Unity has always been a protest against polytheism. We cannot worship Truth in science and Tradition in religion; we cannot adore Service in the home and Success in the market-place. The basic article in the ancient faith of Israel must still be fundamental in our doctrine of God: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord." But men who had been brought up in that one friendly spiritual home, when they met Jesus, found Him so much more truly at home in the Unseen that they asked Him: "Master, where dwellest Thou?" and He answered: "Come, and ye shall see." One cannot know what Jesus' spiritual home is like until one lives with Him. When Andrew and Philip lived with Jesus, what did these disciples see? They saw above Him and them a Father's care and companionship. They prayed with Him: "Our Father, Thy will be done." Then, after Jesus had lived with them and died and risen, they saw this Father unveiled in Him, and one

of them called Jesus: "My Lord and my God." Then they found that the Spirit of their Home had got into them and was their life. That is not surprising; for is not that exactly what happens in all homes? A child begins by being regulated by his father and mother; then he passes on to imitate them; then, when perhaps they are no longer at hand, their spirit lives on in him, affecting his decisions, governing his purposes, enriching his life. Regulation, imitation, inspiration—we pass through all three and all three continue side by side as processes by which we children find ourselves influenced by God. The metaphor of the home interprets the experience which the doctrine has formulated. One need not go off into speculations of the relations of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. The preacher is concerned to bring his people into the dwelling-place of the devout generations, and point out what they will find in God.

In religion this is a wistful age. It is acknowledged that man's powers have outgrown his spirit, and there is a craving, often inarticulate, for enlargement of soul, and for that spiritual fellowship in which souls grow. A typical expression of the age is heard in some letters, written a very few years ago by a former member of Woodrow Wilson's cabinet, the late Franklin K.

Lane. He writes: "I am trying to get hold of something that might be called the shadow of a religion—a God that has a good purpose, and another life in which there is a chance for growth, if not for glory. But when I bump up against a series of afflictions, I fall back upon a philosophy of a purposeless or else a cruel God. I simply have a sinking of the heart, a goneness, a hopelessness." And again: "My God, how I do cling to what scraps of faith I have and put them together to make a cap for my poor head." And still again, looking out on the problems of the day, he writes: "I do not believe that we shall change this world much for the good out of any materialistic philosophy or by any shifting of economic affairs. We need a revival—a belief in something bigger than ourselves and more lasting than the world." Such a hungry but uniformed age needs to be told, as plainly and convincingly as a preacher can, what the Christian faith is; and its principal convictions ought to be set forth as though the hearers were listening to them for the first time, taking no knowledge for granted. From time to time let a minister give a course in the main doctrines, and state what we believe concerning religion, the Bible, Jesus Christ, God, man, sin, salvation, the new life individual and social, the Church, the future hope.

Another fruitful line of teaching for this wistful day is to describe the results of Christian faith. Let the preacher handle the normal Christian experience, and tell what believers discover in their fellowship with God in Christ:—refreshment, cleansing, power, illumination, fruitfulness, buoyancy, adventure, unity, and the like. He will use the experience so richly available in the Scriptures, and he will supplement it from the treasures of Christian biography, and make it as contemporaneous as he can. We know that on the one hand there are not a few steady churchgoers who seem to get very little satisfaction out of their nominal intercourse with the Unseen; and that on the other hand there are clamant critical voices asserting that religion is illusion, God a projection of man's childish wish to feel himself fathered in a lonely universe, and that the effect of religion upon its devotees is to render and keep them infantile. There is no better way of opening up their unsuspected and unused wealth to the one and of correcting the mistaken ideas of the other than by setting forth what Christian faith does for those who understand and employ it.

Nor is any apologetic more persuasive. Show men results, and it is difficult for them to believe that they have no adequate cause, that the most

prized spiritual gains are to be attributed to a mere phantasy. If they are wistful, it is likely that they will follow up the effects to see what is behind them and what accounts for them. Many of you are familiar with that romantic chapter in astronomy which records the discovery of the planet Neptune. In 1781 Sir William Herschell had found the planet Uranus, and had plotted the course which it would take for a number of years to come. But as time went by astronomers saw that the planet was not moving as Sir William had predicted. They re-examined his calculations, but could detect no error. So they concluded that some other globe, off in space beyond the reach of any of their telescopes, was deflecting Uranus from the orbit which it otherwise would pursue. The British mathematician, Adams, and the Frenchman, Le Verrier, calculated its probable location and size. In 1846 Sir John Herschell wrote of this mysterious body, unknown save for its effects: "We see it as Columbus saw America from the shores of Spain. Its movements have been felt trembling along the far-reaching line of our analysis with a certainty hardly inferior to that of ocular demonstration." And before that year had elapsed, by means of an improved lens, the German astronomer, Galle, saw the planet Neptune, and found it almost ex-

actly at the distance and of the dimensions which had been forecast. Here are lives undergoing certain experiences, deflected from some courses and held to others, who explain the constraint to which they respond as due to their relationship to the living God. He is invisible, and so beyond the processes of scientific demonstration. But to those who know His influence upon men, especially those who know it upon themselves, He is no guess but the basic spiritual certainty.

Still another useful approach is to take up the question, frequently put in a cynical tone by the incredulous, "What difference does it make?" A preacher may examine a fairly wide range of life under such captions as: "What difference does Christian faith make in a man's decision? in his ordeals? in his obligations? in his manners? in his resources? in his appreciations? in his hopes?" Here again he can profitably use biographical material from both Christian and non-Christian sources. Under the last heading what a contrast there is between the exquisite tribute which Clement of Alexandria pays to Jesus when he writes: "He has turned all our sunsets into sunrise," and the conclusion of the recent autobiography of that extraordinarily versatile man, Sir Harry Johnston, artist, linguist, naturalist, public official, novelist, who having given

over, if he ever possessed, the Christian point of view, writes: "There is just a hope, a faint struggling hope, that mankind, united in purpose, striving to create and maintain better and better control over this Planet, may stave off eventual annihilation, may even make itself (millions or billions of years hence) master of the solar system." We do well to force men to face the issue:—Suppose the Christian faith be untenable, what is the prospect? what the principles on which life is to be lived? what the resultant characters and social relations to be looked for? Suppose the Christian faith be true, what manner of men ought we to be? what are our responsibilities? our reinforcements? our outlooks?

Or the same question may be put in connection with specific Christian convictions:—What difference does it make whether a man believes in the fatherhood of God? in the lordship of Jesus? in the Holy Spirit? in the Christian view of man? in the cross? in prayer? in immortality? It is so common among the unthinking to hear the remark: "I don't care what a man believes; his creed does not matter." Men need to be wakened by being confronted with a stark pagan faith (and unhappily it is not in the least difficult to find it in current literature), and made to feel just what follows from that premise. Mr. Gals-

worthy makes one of his characters, a soldier, say as he dies: "Waste no breath on me—you cannot help. Who knows—who knows? I have no hope, no faith; but I am adventuring. Good-bye." Suppose the spiritual interpretation of life and death be false, what room is there for adventure? If we be so much dust, there will be little adventure in a cemetery. The young soldier's language is a survival from a more believing day. "Good-bye" is, disguised and contracted, "God be with you." We recover for the Christian faith something of the radiant glory in which it first burst upon our world and still breaks upon minds reared in the relative darkness of some other creed, when we present it in contrast with an opposing point of view. The literature, all too meagre, which comes from mission fields, is valuable for this purpose. There is illustrative material in the biographies of honest minds who have parted with the Christian faith in which they were brought up, and then describe the difference for them in their new creed. One of the most distinguished of the graduates of my own *alma mater,* Yale College, the poet Edward Rowland Sill, was caught in the bewilderments which overtook many thoughtful minds in the 1860s and gave up a cherished ambition to enter the Christian ministry. He confided in a letter to a friend:

"People think that a thinking man's speculations about religion interfere with his daily life very little—but how certain conclusions do take the shine out of one's existence." And on the other hand, one can explore the careers of those who were mastered by a mighty faith. Readers of Southey's life of John Wesley will recall how upon its final page he sums up that forceful and fruitful personality: "He was a man of great views, great energies, and great virtues." The order is significant: great views accounted for the energies and the virtues. There is the reason for doctrinal preaching. Men need the views, great in love which give them a homelike feeling in this universe, great in wisdom which enable them to walk and work purposefully amid the tangle of circumstance, great in power which furnish them with all-sufficient supplies to master evil within and without and leave the world more Christlike for their service in it.

Still another useful line of doctrinal preaching is to give the Christian attitude towards life's happenings. One may entitle the course "A Christian Interpretation of Life," and let the series of sermons deal with the Christian View of Life, of the Earth in which we live, of Possessions, of Success and Failure, of Pain, of Temptation, of Opportunity, of Burdens, of Pleasures,

of Death. The preacher starts in each case with the raw material of experience—experience in which for the most part men are unaware of God, and which therefore seems meaningless to them. He connects our experiences with similar experience through which Jesus passed, and lets the light of Christ fall upon our life. None can say that theology so approached is unpractical and remote from daily concerns. Christianity is a Way, a particular method of handling happenings or a specific path through situations. But it is a Way because it is also a Truth, an explanation of occurrences which gives them divine significance.

This suggests one theme on which a preacher needs to speak at least once a year and to speak with the utmost caution, for it is a most difficult subject—the Providence of God. How shall we interpret His control over a world which is still only in the making and which is as yet so imperfectly ethicised? On the one hand we believe in God's sovereignty, His wise provision which has planned existence and directs it to loving ends. On the other hand we believe in human freedom, which may thwart God's will, and in human initiative which summons us to be co-creators of this unfinished world, mastering disease, subduing forces that imperil humanity, organis-

ing that commonwealth of loving spirits who shall use the earth and the fulness thereof in justice and good will. To live in a dwelling still under construction is hazardous. It will not do to bid men accept as God's will social conditions or physical infirmities which are due to man's ignorance or selfishness. But the dwelling is of God's planning, and He knows the risks involved in its building. He has accepted them, and exposed His children to them. We must accept them with Him, and also with Him strive to make the dwelling more safe and homelike for those who shall succeed us. We must acquire both the acquiescence of Jesus in stern necessities, and the aggressiveness of Jesus towards hampering circumstance. This is theological preaching which supplies a reasonable basis both for courage and determination and for patience and tranquillity of soul.

And this naturally leads to another theme which should have even more frequent treatment —the subject of personal intercourse with God. Sermons on prayer are more likely to call forth expressions of sincere appreciation than sermons on any other topic. And when we treat this matter of communion with God, let us not be hesitant in giving concrete suggestions as to how to read the Bible for personal devotion, and how to

pray, and how to spend a few minutes in silent meditation. We make a great mistake if we fancy that such details are too elementary. To be sure, temperaments vary and a method which suits one does not fit another, but there are many in all our congregations to whom fellowship with the Invisible means next to nothing, because they have no idea whatsoever how to establish and maintain helpful contact with the Most Near. Here of all places let the preacher think of himself as an instructor, speaking both from his own experience and from observation and telling men and women how to wait upon God. Supremely let us be sure that we make plain that the all-important result of such prayer and Bible study and meditation is God Himself in more conscious and enlightening and empowering comradeship with us. We must not forget that the meaning of our Lord's great saying is "Every one that asketh," whatever may be his immediate desire, "receiveth God." "How much more shall your heavenly Father give *the Holy Spirit* to them that ask Him."

The supreme subject of doctrinal preaching is the cross of Christ. One has only to measure the relative space given it in the New Testament, not only in the epistles but in all four gospels, to gain an idea of the proportionate attention it

should receive in the teaching of those who wish to be guided by the New Testament balance. It is a good plan annually to devote the Sundays which lead up to Good Friday to a course of sermons upon some aspect of the death of Christ. Usually one discovers that his people are more reverent, more tender, more moved, during such preaching than at ordinary times. There is a searching course of sermons in the factors which nailed Christ to the tree—Church leaders, possessors of lucrative vested rights, an imperial official, an aristocrat and man of the world, a disappointed idealist, soldiers, a mob, the unprotesting public. One often hears it said that the modern pulpit does not preach sin. Men are not led to repentance by general treatments of evil, but in such concrete portrayals of those who caused the supreme tragedy at Golgotha, the mirror is held up and we see ourselves.

There is another rewarding course in the attempt to answer the question, Why did Jesus go to Calvary? taking up those events or sayings in the Gospel which throw most light on Jesus's own conception of His mission:—the Baptism, the Temptation, the Conversation with His disciples on cross-bearing, the Transfiguration, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Lord's Supper, Gethsemane, Calvary.

Still a third course may gather up the doctrinal results of these historical approaches to the death of Christ, and interpret "the word of the cross" on Sin, Suffering, Forgiveness, Duty, Wisdom, Power—the theology of Golgotha in that it deals with God's Self-disclosure there. On the south shore of Long Island there are many smaller and larger bodies of water which puzzle a visitor to say whether they are ponds or bays. Some of them are ponds, although they lie beside the sand dunes. Their waters may be slightly brackish, but their fish and plants are those of inland pools. Others have an open inlet from the Atlantic: their fish and plants are those of the salt ocean, and their waters rise and fall with the tides of the great deep. We can never understand and interpret the cross until we see in it not only man's supreme achievement, but God's Self-revelation in His vicariously suffering, sin-bearing Son.

And one has only begun to suggest the many series of doctrinal sermons which year after year a preacher finds in some aspect of the mightiest redemptive act of God. Think of the New Testament passages which treat it as a measure "even as." That is a fine saying which comes to us from Clement of Alexandria: "Our boundary, our limit, is the cross." A New Testament writer

speaks of "the Pioneer of faith, who endured the cross;" and it is the frontier of much more than faith—of sympathy, of service, of sacrifice, of the outgoing Heart of God and of the upreaching conscience of Man. Here is a theme for a preacher's clearest thinking and his most moving pleading—Christ crucified, the wisdom and power of God.

We began by speaking of theology as the ever-changing interpretation of the soul's life with God. Since the advent and widespread use of motor vehicles, our American roads have been everywhere reconstructed and are again and again under repair. One can scarcely make a day's run in most parts of the country without finding some segment of highway in the hands of road-makers; but one takes the route confident that a temporary detour, however rough, has been provided so that traffic is not blocked. It is much the same with theology in every generation, and certainly in ours. Many a doctrine has been and still is under reconstruction, and at times we are forced to travel in our thinking by rather crudely improvised detours. But the highways of thought that link man with the Invisible are open; and it is for us preachers to familiarise ourselves and our people with them, that they and we may be in conscious and intelligent fellowship with God.

LECTURE III

ETHICAL PREACHING

LECTURE III

ETHICAL PREACHING

A CENTURY ago John Foster, commenting upon the defects of the preaching in that day, wrote: "In the department of Christian morality, I think many of those who are distinguished as evangelical preachers are greatly and culpably deficient. They rarely, if ever, take some one topic of moral duty, as honesty, veracity, impartiality, temper, forgiveness of injuries, the improvement of time, and investigate specifically its principles, rules, discriminations, adaptions. Such discussions would have cost far more labor of thought than dwelling and expatiating on the general evangelical doctrines, but would have been eminently useful." Waiving the point whether ethical preaching requires more intellectual outlay than the theological preaching, we shall agree with Foster's plea for thoroughgoing treatment of Christian duty in the pulpit.

One can think of several reasons for its relative neglect:

A first is the confidence in the spontaneous appearance and growth of the fruits of the Spirit,

when a man has been persuaded to admit Christ to the lordship of his will. There is an automatic change in character springing from the depths where motives take their rise. St. Paul wrote the Thessalonians: "Concerning love of the brethren, ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." But it is noteworthy how large a space in his letters the apostle devotes to writing about this very grace. He does not appear to expect it to spring and flourish of itself. Perhaps his introduction of the topic with the statement that it is needless to mention it is merely good pedagogy, as we say to a child: "Of course you will share this with your brother," when we fear that the chances of selfishness are very great. The spiritual life is like certain vines, which will either lie on the ground in a tangle, or trail off over the garden to interfere with and strangle other growths, or will climb a trellis if one be provided and the young shoots started upon it. The ideals which are held up before Christians are the trellis, which both supplies the vine of their spirit with something to climb upon and also determines the shape and appearance which their life will take. A chief criticism of much of the most earnest evangelical preaching, which pleads with men "to accept Christ," is that the word "Chris-

tian" is left without definite ethical content. We cannot be too explicit in teaching what the life "in Christ" demands.

A second reason is that preachers take for granted that their listeners know what goodness is, and merely need compulsions to try to be good. Every generation has labelled its desired virtues "Christian," with little regard to their appraisal by the historic Jesus. In the generations when the ethics of capitalism were unquestioned among evangelical Christians, self-reliance, push and thrift were extolled in pulpit and Sunday School. They are certainly not without a basis in the teaching of Jesus, nor would we belittle them today. But they have often been anything but virtues in the forms which they have taken. (There is no doubt something humorous in a Yankee's discussing these characteristics with Scotsmen, but of all mankind you and I ought to know whereof we are speaking.) We must always remember that Jesus did not come to help men attain current ideals. The righteousness of His disciples was to exceed the righteousness of the best men of the time. Their conduct was to be so conspicuously above the level of even the good that they would stand out as a city set on a hill. It is the preacher's task in every age to point to the hill. A current indictment of the Church

runs that membership in it is no guarantee of an outstanding conscience. One would not disparage the work of rescue and especially of prevention carried on by our churches. We pull up some who have fallen into pits, and we keep many more from tumbling in. But we pull them up to and hold them on the common level. They are as good as, but no better than, the people on the same block. If Christians are to be salt and light and leaven, we must concern ourselves with that which differentiates them in motive and principle. This was the controlling interest in most of the preaching of Jesus.

A third reason is both the difficulty of thinking through what the Christian ideal is under existing social conditions—a matter, as Foster well says, of costly mental labor—and a Protestant minister's rightful shrinking from seeming to direct the consciences of others. We do not wish congregations of spiritual children, who call us "Father" and docilely do as we bid them, but of mature sons and daughters of God. The danger, however, either in Scotland or America, of a preacher's impairing the spiritual independence of his hearers is slight. Few congregations take their minister's ethical judgments too seriously. As pastors, when people come for counsel upon personal problems, we

must be cautious in proffering specific advice and allowing dependent natures to shift responsibility for their decisions on our shoulders; but as preachers, addressing numbers of folk, we are rarely in peril of handling matters of Christian duty too explicitly. Our danger is quite the reverse: we do not teach them what Christian love and trust and frankness and patience and self-control and gladness are. We fail to follow the Master in showing them how to be sons of God.

In laying out his pulpit work for a period of months, a preacher ought surely to plan one series of sermons on Christian duty. He may start from the rich Biblical material. There is an excellent course of sermons in "The Good Life according to Israel's Law," which lists under appropriate topics a judicious selection of the precepts laid down in the legal parts of the Pentateuch, completing each with the teaching of Jesus. This may seem to be going far afield for enlightenment and inspiration on the ethical questions of today. What have the prohibitions against seething a kid in its mother's milk, or wearing a garment of mixed materials, or the command to build a parapet around the roof of one's house, to do with present Christian obligations? Not much directly; but these were ways of cultivating respectively delicate feeling, sin-

cerity and thoughtfulness. One may use them as striking and picturesque beginnings, and draw the body of one's sermon from the application of the mind of Christ to definite current situations which demand these virtues.

There is much more specific guidance in a series upon Wisdom's Ways, as described in the Book of Proverbs and in the Apocryphal Books of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. Here again a preacher must select his subjects and group his verses, for no part of the Bible appears to have been thrown together so helter-skelter: Wisdom's Way in Friendship, in Conversation, in Hospitality, in Business Dealings, in Work, in Self-control, and so on.

A preacher is on more Christian ground when he takes the ethical injunctions in the concluding portions of St. Paul's letters or selects half a dozen subjects from the Epistle of James. It is a less easy matter to arrange a satisfactory series in the teaching of our Lord Himself, for His principles are not as specific in form and they cover a wider range of life. However, there is an ample literature to help us, and I cannot do better than recommend the admirable little book on this subject, into which my distinguished colleague at Union Seminary, Professor Ernest F. Scott, one of the richest gifts your Church has

made to America, has packed so much learning, insight and sound sense.

As was said in a previous lecture, one advantage of using the Bible as the basis of one's instruction is that its writers inevitably suggest points which the preacher would not himself think of. If a man is giving a series on the fruits of the Spirit, as St. Paul itemizes them, or upon the Beatitudes as they stand in St. Matthew, he will be led to several qualities which he would not have put down on a list of his own choosing. If he handles the Ten Commandments, he finds in the Tenth a more searching test of the motives which underlie the Eighth, for one can deal with the principles that govern property without discussing the attitude of heart which one is forced to search out in covetousness. If one is treating Love upon the basis of the Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians, one must do justice to all the aspects of the apostle's many-sided analysis of what Love does and does not do. Moreover the Bible puts its principles into language which cannot be bettered for pointedness and profundity, and which carries with it the approbation of the generations of the faithful who have lived by these precepts and found them wise. But it is a mistake always to start with the ethical teaching of some Biblical book.

It has already been urged that a preacher select his topics; and such selection presupposes that he begin with the needs of his hearers, and use only so much of the matter in the Scripture as fits his purpose. Often he will arouse more interest by announcing a list of topics on conduct, bringing in Biblical passages, and particularly the example and teaching of Christ, in his treatment of each theme.

For instance, he may call the series: "The Christian Management of Life." In one of his letters Jowett, the Master of Balliol, speaks of an illness as something to be "managed." A Christian is one who overcomes the world and subdues it to His Master's purpose. Under the general caption the preacher may place such headings as he thinks his congregation need to have dealt with; the Christian's Management of the Body, of Feelings, of Tastes, of Time, of Money, of Disappointments, and the like. In preparing for such a course, a preacher may solicit from the congregation situations or circumstances which they find it hard to master and Christianise. Parents and teachers often welcome the chance to share some of their difficulties, and to hear them treated from the pulpit.

Or starting from the noble conception of St. Paul, a conception in which he voices Jesus'

lordly attitude towards the world, that everything belongs to children of God, a preacher may give a series upon "A Christian's Use of His Possessions"—"of Health, of Suffering, of Influence, of the Love of Others, of Education, of His Work, of Recreation, of Abilities and Defects, of Life's Successive Stages—Youth, the Middle Years, Old Age, of Sorrow, of Death." A text for the course is "All things are yours," and such a course aims to give followers of Christ their Master's sense of being at home in a Father's universe with a possessive right to enjoy and use all that happens to them. A not dissimilar course of sermons may take its title from Shakespeare's "Seven Ages of Man," and discuss successively the control by the Spirit of Christ of Infancy, Boyhood, Young Manhood and the rest. One can illustrate from Christian literature and biography, and bring home the educational design of our human life, its tragedy for the unteachable, and its lessons for those who spend it in the school of Jesus.

Or again, mindful that Christ comes not to destroy but to complete, to transmute the good into the best, a preacher may treat "Common Virtues Uncommonly Exemplified in Christ"; and deal with Honesty, Courage, Fairness, Kindness, Sympathy, Candour, Industry, Af-

fection, Fidelity, as they are illustrated in Jesus Himself. As men look in Him at the qualities which they praise in others and crave for themselves, the miracle of Cana is re-enacted before their eyes. Our ordinary words for the admirable are carelessly used and cheapened. We seldom weigh them when we call a man brave or kindly or faithful. Our moral currency easily becomes debased, and the words for worth in our vocabulary suffer from inflation. The study of the character of Jesus, and the definition of virtues in terms of His life, puts them on the solid basis of heavenly gold. He turns our abstracts into concretes, and gives our loftiest adjectives yet higher value.

Or a preacher may take some generally esteemed characteristic, like the sense of humour, and study its uses and abuses, and illustrate from Christ's employment of it its place among the qualities which belong in the household of faith. "There is a time to laugh."

Or he may view the elements of character to be cultivated from their use in the several relations of life:—the Christian at Home, at Business, at Play, in the Church, as a Citizen, as a Man of the World. Such a course opens the way for plain speaking on sins and defects as well as on virtues to be sought after. It not infrequently

happens that one who possesses the domestic graces in a high degree is singularly lacking in business ethics, and that the loyal and devoted churchman is a poor citizen. A Christian's responsibilities lie about him in concentric circles: they begin in the home, but they reach out to the whole family of mankind. We learn in the home considerateness, patience, responsibility for others and happiness in serving them; we must carry these virtues out into the realm of industry and commerce. We acquire system, reliability and initiative in business affairs; and must take these qualities into our work as members of the Church. We are taught as citizens respect for the rights of others, special care for the weak in order that the state may be strong, the subordination of self-interest to patriotism; like characteristics are requisite in the citizen of the commonwealth of nations. It is a preacher's duty to make clear what the obligations in each circle are in the light of Jesus Christ.

Something has been said of the satisfaction many derive from the explicit teaching in the control of life given by Christian Science and similar cults. It is a serious reflection on the church that those brought up in its congregations often hear for the first time in their lives from these questionable movements how to use religion

to cope with some of the ills of life. When hundreds profess themselves benefited by employing autosuggestion in such banal formulæ as those of M. Coué, one is reproached to think of the treasury of vastly finer phases for the same purpose within the covers of the Bible, which neither we nor our people dream of using. A preacher discovers that a series of sermons upon "Religion and Healthy Living" affords a welcome opportunity for his people to think of the nexus of faith and health, to be shown the exaggerated and false teaching both of materialistic science and of these unscientific cults, and to have opened up to them some of the passages in Scripture with which to suggest to themselves the courage and serenity and poise they need. Take such themes as "Faith and Fatigue," "Faith and Nervousness," "Faith and Worry," "Faith and Fear," "Faith and Pain," "Faith and Emergencies," "Faith and Weakness," "Faith and the Inevitable," and one has a course in an aspect of Christian ethics which places in the category of sins attitudes of mind not so regarded—anxiety, restlessness, waste of energy and so forth, and which gives a preacher a chance to suggest the proper regulation of the physical and mental life, and the bringing of the whole man under the

sway of the guiding and empowering Spirit of Christ.

The preacher will need to study books that are scientifically reliable, to consult neurologists and psychiatrists who are usually most kind in their willingness to assist and who often welcome a minister's help with their cases, to let some man of competent medical training tell him frankly mistakes to avoid. In sermons upon these topics vague generalities must be scrupulously avoided and illustrations drawn from concrete cases. Varieties of fatigue or nervousness or fear must be instanced, so that hearers find their cases appreciated and understood; the causes of their weaknesses and inhibitions must be analysed; and definite methods of dealing with them suggested. One cannot be too specific in giving verses which have helped persons through ordeals or enabled them to overcome sleeplessness, and in telling just how impediments have been conquered and burdens borne. The strain of our complex and rushed life demands reinforcements of the spirit to endure it and to find in it a means of growing a larger soul. "As thy days so shall thy strength be" is a promise vouchsafed to every generation of God's children. We do not question the adequacy of our resources in God; but it

is patent that relatively few Christians know how to avail themselves of these resources in crises and under the steady strain of life. Here is a preacher's chance to show how the Bible can be used and how prayer can effect spiritual repair. There is a "law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," and it is our duty to know that law, and to be able to show our people how to conform to it and be freed by it from needless thraldoms and made victorious in life and in death.

We differ radically from cults which deny the existence of the disagreeable and painful. We have no sympathy with ascetics who urge voluntary infliction of suffering or submission to hardships as in themselves spiritually beneficial. Nor have we anything in common with the at present widespread feeling that everything unpleasant is to be avoided, that no cravings are to be repressed, that no irksome obligations are to be endured: this is crass paganism and the direct antithesis of losing one's self to find it. We rejoice in the advances of science and invention which render human life safer and healthier. But we cannot blind our eyes to the fact that civilisation develops new diseases and that progress in man's control of the universe is accompanied with new possibilities of peril. Danger and pain and irritation and death are apparently part of

the order of things. They are not electives but required courses in the curriculum of life. They are to be faced open-eyed; their lessons mastered; and they are themselves to be turned by the grace of Christ to glorious gain both to ourselves and to others.

Take the first theme suggested, "Faith and Fatigue." What is it that wearies us? Some of our fatigue is imaginary. We talk of "tired nerves," but physiologists have demonstrated that the mind wearies before the nervous system, which renews itself overnight. Or we fancy ourselves rushed merely because we live in a busy city or among busy folk; a scrutiny of our week's stint of labour reveals no overburden. Thinking one's self tired brings on exhaustion. Some of our fatigue is needless:—living experiences over again and again in retrospect and blaming one's self for mistakes; inability to relax so that we sit in a taxicab tensely pushing the car forward to hasten to a destination, or lie on our beds with taut muscles and clenched hands; want of system by which we idle part of a week and let six days' task pile up into three; faulty planning of time, trying to do creative work at night instead of in the morning, and with stimulated brains wonder that we cannot sleep. Breakdowns due to such causes are moral, not physical.

Some of our fatigue is necessary:—routine placing the same strains in the same places (a steel rail wears out because the pounding of the trains, repeating the same vibrations, loosens the molecules in the steel); let-downs inevitably succeeding special efforts; the rub of other people upon us wearing even though we do not realise it. Are we providing change of mind and feeling? renewals after outlays? solitude of soul for self-possession? Religion offers us in God the Fountain of life. They that wait on Him renew their strength. A Bible passage, a church service, prayer, a thought of God supplies spiritual change, suggests the soul's exhaustless resources, isolates from people and brings balance and self-mastery. Have we learned to rest in the Lord? To relax our spirits on such promises as "Underneath are the everlasting arms," "Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass"; "My grace is sufficient for thee"; "He restoreth my soul"? A head of a nurses' training school and superintendent of the nurses in a large hospital, at the close of a month's epidemic of influenza, with a much depleted force of nurses, for it was in the war when fully half her staff were overseas, having worked nearly twenty hours out of each twenty-four, said to a subordinate: "I'm all in. I must consult a

nerve specialist or"—and she does not know why she said it, for she had not attended church in years—"go to church." The next evening, being Sunday, she put on her hat and started out, against the remonstrances of this other nurse, who told her she should be in bed. She entered the church, had her mind soothed by prayer and hymn, and carried to other thoughts. She went back to her work calmed, had a few hours of untroubled rest, and went bravely and vigorously on with her responsible work. "Our sufficiency is of God!"

Or take the final theme suggested a moment ago—"Faith and the Inevitable." Here are situations where incurable disease has to be faced, or crippling financial loss, or the estrangement of friends, or the death of one's beloved, or a domestic tragedy worse than death. How shall one meet them? One finds a supreme instance in Jesus in Gethsemane. He does not blindly accept the cross: even at the eleventh hour, when He seemed to have reached a conclusion, saying, "The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him," He canvasses other alternatives: "If it be possible." But His inquiring mind is forced to view the tragic and appalling ordeal of a felon's execution as inescapable. There is an interesting difference in the account of His prayers in the nar-

ratives of Mark and Matthew. St. Mark reports Him in His second prayer as "saying the same words"; but the first evangelist puts different words on His lips. He had prayed: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." The second time He prays: "My Father, if this cannot pass away except I drink it." He is confronting the inevitable. Men face it in various ways. Some attempt to deaden their senses with drink or drugs, or immerse themselves in pleasure or business to forget it. Others rebel and protest and are driven to it, "like the quarry slave at night scourged to his dungeon." Others set their teeth and summon up their resolve and grimly go through with it. Sir Walter Scott, heroically as he met his disaster and sorrows, seems more a stoic than a Christian. When Lady Scott lay dying, he quoted from Shakespeare:—

> Are these things then necessities?
> Then let us meet them like necessities.

And there is much of the same temper in what is called the spirit of "a good sport," which is the popular ideal held up so generally before young folk today. How does Jesus meet the inevitable. He looks it in the face, refusing the narcotic at

Calvary provided by humane feeling. He will "taste the whole of it." He utters no word of complaint against the falseness of Judas or the bigotry of priests or the injustice of the civil governor: He accepts the inevitable not from their hands but from His Father's. Instead of stoic resignation, He cordially acquiesces and gives Himself to carry out, so far as He may, His Father's will: "Thy will be *done*." He gives the unavoidable a welcome, and trustfully and obediently works with it, and renders it an incalculable blessing.

The preacher who handles a series of this kind must expect to have the sermons followed up by calls from persons who wish to consult him, either for themselves or for their friends; and his time and energy may be heavily drawn on. He will have a chance to practise what he has been preaching, and to replenish himself from those exhaustless reservoirs of the Spirit to which he has been pointing others. Perhaps he can arrange more informal meetings, like the midweek service of prayer, where persons who have used their faith to master weaknesses and to overcome or transform their limitations can tell their experiences, or at least suggest the help which they have found in particular Bible passages or in other means of grace. The vogue of often

(2) 130

fantastic cults is surely evidence that men are looking for help in their souls to meet life's overwhelming demands and to conquer inhibitions in their own natures. It is scientifically demonstrable that the well-being of the body is closely related with the vigour of the spirit. As pastors we are confronted with the alternative of having our people consult psycho-analysts or other practitioners on the mind, few of whom are either scientifically or spiritually qualified for the task, or of attempting to help them ourselves, in conjunction, if need be, with duly accredited physicians, most of whom welcome our partnership. There is a considerable literature, both from the scientific and religious standpoint, upon which we may draw. Historically the Christian Church has precedents, both in her formative period in the New Testament and throughout the centuries, for including the principles of healthy living as part of her mission of teaching. We may well shrink from it as exceedingly difficult and delicate. Some of us are pathetically ill-equipped in temperament or in knowledge to deal with it. But it seems a part of every preacher's plain duty, and he dare not neglect it.

For nearly a generation now a new emphasis has been placed upon the social embodiment of the Spirit of Christ. Would that it had come

earlier and the world catastrophe averted! The Kingdom of God is not made up of redeemed individuals only, but of transformed families and nations and races. This opens up a wide range of topics for the preacher.

Let him begin and lay most stress upon the Christian ideal of the family. The principles of Jesus are best learned there, for the great words of our religion—Father, love, brethren—are drawn from the home. And today the Christian home is in jeopardy. The permanence of the marriage tie is widely flouted. In the United States several hundred thousands are living in a legalised consecutive concubinage, marrying, divorcing and marrying again. The percentage from the latest figures is for the entire country one divorce to every nine marriages, and in certain notorious states one divorce to every three or four marriages. Britain is moving in the same direction, although happily at no such appalling rate. A pastor with us is constantly shocked by members of his congregation who come to tell him that their home is on the verge of breaking. There are situations where it is inhuman to forbid the separation of man and wife; but these occur rarely, and heroic souls, with a loyal love like Hosea's, can often hold on, despite the impossible, and work redemption. We must

not hesitate in these soft days to call for heroism in the wedded relation. And it is the lightness with which marriage vows are repudiated which is terrifying. A wife complains that her husband represses her personality, and a husband says, "My wife has never understood me," and consoles himself with a more artful charmer. The unfortunate children are unconsidered, or their parents dupe themselves into thinking that the arrangements by which boys and girls spend a few months with mother and her new mate, and a few months with father and his new partner, are happier for them than when father and mother were plainly uncongenial together and often quarreled in their presence. There is dire need for teaching what is meant by marrying and staying married "in the Lord."

Nor are the relations of parents and children easy in many homes. With us where the children of the foreign-born often know more of American life than their elders, and frequently earn more while still in their teens, it is they who lead their parents rather than being led by them. And on both sides of the Atlantic there is a new independence among the young, and especially among girls, which has in it elements both good and bad. What is the purpose of the home in the kingdom of God? What should the family mean

to both parents and children? What are their mutual responsibilities? What qualities in either make home unhappy? What are the duties of a Christian in a spiritually unsympathetic family? Chesterton has said that the family is a good institution because it is uncongenial. How should personal religion manifest itself in home relations? You may recall George Eliot's remark, *apropos* of Bulstrode, concerning persons whose "celestial intimacies seem not to improve their domestic manners." What customs of family religion hallow the home? What temptations to a Christian lurk in family ties, and how may a home be dedicated to the kingdom of Christ? Here is matter for many sermons, and matter which demands frequent treatment.

Next there is the Christianising of industry. Our main interest is in the types of men and women an economic system produces; and industrial systems are reservoirs of motives, a moral water-supply. One approach to the subject is to describe several typical organisations of society—for example, the Greek City State, the Feudal System, the present Capitalist Order—and to point out what virtues each inculcates, and what elements in the population feel its moral incentives. The Greek City State stressed the civic virtues, but not for slaves, who were

the miners and other laborers, and who numbered sometimes as many as four-fifths of the inhabitants. The Feudal System held up the militarist virtues—honour, loyalty, courtesy, obedience, courage—but the ethics of chivalry had no appeal for the serf or the trader. The Capitalist Régime puts a premium on initiative, enterprise, thrift, reliability, and its incentives stimulate a large percentage of the people; but they can afford little inspiration to those born to great wealth (who usually take up the feudal code) or with those who have no chance to rise. Do any of these systems promote the virtues of the Gospel? Do they produce the brotherhood in labor and enjoyment which the Spirit of Jesus demands? So the preacher holds up the Kingdom of God in protest against existing industrial relations, and paints a vision of the world's work under the reign of the ministering Son of man.

But this by no means exhausts his responsibility as a teacher of social righteousness. Men set in positions of leadership in business enterprises and compelled to carry on, and workers suffering from unemployment or confronted with harsh and inhuman conditions when employed, become restive when preachers sketch Utopias. God forbid that we should cease to proclaim Christ's kingdom in all its glory: visions

have their place, for "we are saved in hope." But preachers have the more difficult task of showing what Christians can and ought to do under present circumstances, and thus hasten a better tomorrow. In our congregations are thoughtful folk who know that for them there remain but five or ten or twenty years of active work. It is heartening to view on the horizon what shall be when the reign of God in industry has arrived; but they not unnaturally wish to know what is their duty meanwhile, and what advances they may attempt ere their day is done.

The Scylla and Charybdis between which preachers on this subject must steer are indulging in platitudes:—that the Spirit of Christ applied to industry will solve all our problems, that the use of Christian love will end economic strife, etc.—and we have had this sort of thing from the pulpit *ad nauseam;* and the attempt without first-hand knowledge to tell those who know how to conduct their affairs. This does not mean that a minister need remain ignorant. If he will take the trouble he can familiarise himself in detail with the conditions in at least one industry. And ministers ought to acquaint themselves with the leading industry in their community—agriculture, mining, or some occupation or form of manufacture or commerce. If a minister be

really informed, earnestly concerned and scrupulously fair, he can be of the utmost service in helping to avert strife and in bettering the spirit and conditions in which the work is done. And with this first-hand contact he can speak from the pulpit with assurance and give counsel which will be listened to.

Some scholars have taught that the ethics of the New Testament were provisional, an *Interimsethik,* for its writers were looking for the speedy advent of the kingdom. They were wrong in forgetting that the spirit and principles given by Jesus and His first interpreters are permanently valid; they were right in insisting that the applications made in the New Testament to concrete problems were provisional. This renders these solutions not less but more valuable to us. Every generation of Christians find themselves in an interim between an outworn past and a desired, but imperfectly discerned, future. Our Christian solutions of social questions must accordingly be always temporary. This does not make them for their day any the less Christian, for Christianity is essentially a Way—life *en route* towards the kingdom of God. A preacher may entitle a series of sermons "A More Christian Industrial Order," so disclaiming the attempt to set forth the ultimate ideal,

and he may treat the present duties of Christians as Producers, as Consumers, as Owners, as Investors, as Employers, as Employés. This method of handling the subject follows New Testament precedent; seeks to introduce the leavening Spirit of Christ rather than to advocate some economic programme, for which we cannot claim divine authority; and enables us to give counsel sufficiently definite to awaken consciences and spur men and women to think out their own courses as Christians in commercial relations.

Then there is the Christian ideal of recreation. Preachers have indulged far too often in negatives—in condemnation, and usually undiscriminating condemnation, of certain popular forms of amusement and sport. The need is for positive teaching on the necessity of recreation for a wholesome life, on the value for character-building of the right sort of games and outings and reading, on the test of pleasures:—to what does this recreate? A useful text is St. Paul's thrice repeated, "All things are lawful"—the Christian life is one of freedom, not of restriction, "for God giveth us all things richly to enjoy"—and his three qualifying clauses, which raise the questions: Is this expedient? Does it enslave? Does it build character?

There are sports and games which need re-

deeming from brutality and gambling—always a reflection on the intrinsic interest of the sport or game, and a demoralising influence upon work with its principle of gain without compensating service. There are amusements, like the stage and dancing, which can be and often are degraded, but which can also be means of the finest pleasure. You remember how King Asa took the stones and timbers with which a rival monarch had attempted to erect a blockading fortress and employed them in the construction of two towns of Judah. It is the Church's business to take forms of recreation which are inimical to Christian character and remodel them so that their valuable elements promote the purpose of Christ.

The War drove thoughtful Christians to study afresh the application of the mind of Christ to the policies of nations. Few virtues need more intelligent sanctification than patriotism. The New Testament ideal may be phrased by putting side by side St. Peter's saying to Christians, drawn from many lands: "Ye are a holy nation"; and the statement in the seer's vision of the city of God: "They shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it." Christianity creates a fellowship of believers which overleaps national frontiers, and gives the Christian a

superior allegiance to the people of God. It also recognises the individuality of nations with the distinctive contribution which each brings to the commonwealth of mankind, and lays on Christian patriots the obligation to help their nation attain her best.

And without raising again the question of pacifism surely we must agree that it is the duty of the Christian preacher to proclaim the sub-Christian character of war as a means of settling international questions and of accomplishing justice and friendship. And since war is always a symptom of something wrong in economic or political relations, it is our duty to go deeper and bring to light the causes which produce conflict. Like the prophets of Israel, the preacher must deal with his country's mental attitude and her policies in international affairs. The citizens of a democracy determine its statesmanship, and it is all important that their views be Christian. Anniversaries or other national holidays furnish occasions when people expect us to treat public questions. We have to distinguish between moral issues and matters of political theory and preference; but with the recent judgment of God in history before our eyes, with its doom upon aggressive and selfish nationalism, and with the manifestation of the inability of force to

create a desirable world, preachers of the Gospel of redeeming love dare not be silent.

On the pages of the Bible are three attempts to make a righteous world. One is in Eden, where life is regulated by imposed law, and the result is unsatisfactory—a wiser but a fallen race. A second is at the Deluge, when the wicked are eliminated and the righteous segregated to make a new beginning; and the upshot is the wasteful loss of the many, and the swift deterioration of the elect few. A third is the attempt in the coming of Christ to create a righteous world by imbuing mankind with His Spirit. It is the method of leavening by association. And it did not seem more successful than the other efforts. It brought on the tragedy of Golgotha. But how significant is the interpretation of a New Testament writer: "Consider Him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners." In both the other attempts the gainsaying of sinners was not endured; and its endurance by Christ, even to the pouring out of His blood, proved the genesis of a new race.

We use all three methods—regulation, segregation, association—in the home. Little children's lives are prescribed to them; they are segregated from evil; parents try to be their companions and impart their own consciences.

Regulation and segregation have a brief and limited usefulness; it is that of their own selves which parents impart which has lasting influence.

The three methods have their vogue in the Christian Church. Roman Catholicism employs the first, imposing by authority dogma and morals upon the faithful. Protestantism has used the second, constantly separating the orthodox or the godly from those who disagree in belief or differ in ethical standards. The method of Jesus is to let truth stand beside error, confident that its superiority will be recognised, and to allow love to dwell with the unloving, taking the consequences, assured that love will conquer.

The three methods are tried in industry. There is the dictatorship of the capitalist possessors, laying down the terms on which employés shall work, or the dictatorship of the proletariat in Communism. There is the elimination of the capitalist, or the limitation of employés in the closed shop, or the economic isolation of a land by a high protective tariff, or the exclusion by a labour union of workers of another race. One is not saying that such methods may not have a relative and temporary justification; but the principle for Christians is industrial fellowship, seeking to include all and to make each, according to his ability, minister to the commonwealth.

The three methods are illustrated in international relations. The first is seen in imperialism, where a more potent, and perhaps more intelligent, people conquers and governs another. The second is seen in the policy of isolation, so vigorously advocated by a certain type of patriot, who would keep his beloved land out of the entanglements of association with other nations. The third is the manifestly Christian policy of comradeship in thought and effort for the common good.

A preacher has to teach both the Christian ideal of social righteousness and the Christian method of its attainment. The way to establish the Kingdom is the way of Bethlehem and Calvary.

We have been touching hastily upon many ethical topics which a preacher should overtake in his teaching. Let us not forget that no sermon can handle conduct apart from religion, morals without divine power by which Christlike characters are made possible. When we treat some theme of social ethics, it is not enough to bring home present social sins, and to make plain the demands of the Spirit of Christ. We preach the Gospel of God—His gracious presence with us to master evil and bring forth justice in victory. Ethical preaching along social lines

seems to consist of three elements: protest against current wrongs, programme setting forth specifically the steps Christians should take, promise linking God with our ideals and efforts, and so supplying courage, patience and indomitable hope. And it is this last element which is the distinctive contribution of the minister of the Gospel. Ethical teachers criticise prevalent social conditions and plead for advances, consciously or unconsciously prompted by the influence of Jesus Christ, for no teacher of righteousness in our world today escapes the contagion of His ideals. But the unique evangelical note is that back of both protest and programme is the living God, and that with Him what should be shall be. How gloriously the preachers of the Old Testament proclaimed this social Gospel: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord." "The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this." Christian preachers in holding up the ideals of Jesus before individuals and society must be certain to close on this chord of faith. "He who began a good work in you will perfect it." "To them that love God worketh all things with them for good," "To this end we labour and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God."

LECTURE IV

PASTORAL PREACHING

LECTURE IV

PASTORAL PREACHING

THE preacher of the gospel is usually also a pastor, the personal friend of his people and the leader of a congregation in their corporate life and work. Many of his sermons arise from these two relations, and may be spoken of (somewhat clumsily) as pastoral preaching.

A minister who is constantly among his people, visiting them and letting them come freely to him, is certain to have a large supply of subjects on hand in which he will wish to teach them. Sometimes a sermon will be born full-grown, like Minerva from the head of Jove, in some revealing experience to which he is admitted. Often the period of incubation is longer. In a previous lecture it was urged that a preacher keep a notebook with texts and titles and illustrations. Such germinal sermons may lie dormant for months or even years; the preacher thinks them interesting and feels that they promise well, but he is not in travail with them. If he wrote them out, it would be in cold blood. But as he moves among men and women, some human situation

renders this text or theme a most apt and urgent subject of teaching.

For example, he has set down in his notebook the passage about the friend who at midnight raps on his neighbor's door for the loan of three loaves, and he has put over it the caption: "What sends men to pray." He sees there a sermon on social obligation as the spur to religion. It is like that text made striking by its context at the close of the Fourth Chapter of Genesis: "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." Then, when? When family responsibilities began to be felt: "And to Seth, to him also there was born a son, then men began to call." Or like a text in the following chapter, although the author probably did not intend the implication: "Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah." With a life destined to live nearly a millennium to be influenced (and surely we look forward to a vaster destiny for our children) a man may well company with any wiser Comrade who will teach him what to do for his child. Well, there in that passage from St. Luke lies a fruitful subject in the preacher's notebook. One day he is calling on a man and his wife who are exceedingly vague as to what they believe and are not finding much in their inherited faith. They have obviously secondhand relations with God.

They want the best of everything for their children, religion included. Several sudden blows have recently clouded the horizon for them, and the woman remarks: "Why do things come when they are least welcome?" As the minister walks down the street, that page in his notebook flashes on his mind. A new title occurs to him: "The Sacrament of the Inconvenient." It was late in the evening that the travelling friend dropped in, and on the particular night when the larder was empty. He can use all that he has jotted down about social obligations compelling us to seek God, and he has the added point, so true in experience, that they come upon us with their demands usually when we least want them and feel least ready to meet them. Here is the Bible interpreting life, and life giving urgency to the message of the Bible.

Or in reading that impersonal and somewhat inhuman book of Ezekiel, he has been caught by that touching passage on the death of the prophet's wife: "Son of man, behold I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke"; and he is impressed with the brave, self-controlled fashion in which the man went on with his work: "At even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded." It is the sort of passage upon which no sermon can be

well written save as a preacher is himself moved; and it is wisely allowed to remain unused in the notebook. But the minister goes about, he is thrown again and again with folk on whom sudden strokes of sorrow fall, and he watches how they meet them. Perhaps he himself is not untouched by the busy hand of death, and he surely is often darkened as he walks with his friends through their shadowed valley. Then this courageous Old Testament believer's mastery of life's most desolating experience grips his soul. He feels the pathos of it; he is stirred by the nobility of the man who consecrates his lonely heart-ache to his task, and has himself in hand at once for his God-assigned duty.

Or he has noted that suggestive prayer which the Elder John offers for his friend, Gaius: "Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospereth." As he calls to ascertain why some children have been absent from Sunday School, and receives the excuse, common with us, of a certain type of parent, that she has kept them out because she hears that there is a great deal of measles or grippe or chicken-pox about; and on inquiry he learns that these same children attend school five days a week, ride in tram-cars and go to the "movies"; he cannot forbear asking

whether the woman thinks that bacilli become especially virulent on Sundays and use the house of God as a gymnasium all week in which to exercise their powers so that they may leap upon those unfortunate youngsters who are sent for religious education. And as he goes his way, partly amused and partly depressed, it dawns on him that this is a general attitude towards life: children *must* have their schooling and their fun, they *may* be educated in spirit if nothing more entertaining prevents; men *must* make money and have recreation, religion is an extra which those with a taste for it put down in their weekly menu. He goes back to the Elder John, and enters into the discernment and frankness and pointedness of his prayer, and gives it after that manner to his congregation.

When a minister begins a week with the feeling that he is "preached out," let him spend an afternoon (as many of us are compelled to spend four out of every six if we are to overtake our visiting list) in going about from family to family, and asking himself: "What is the spiritual need here? What guidance or comfort or awakening or sharpening of conscience or enrichment in God ought this home or this individual to receive? Or (more rarely) what suggestion from this household or this life can be brought to

the upbuilding of the congregation?" It will often happen that the particular person or family, of whom one is thinking in writing the sermon, will be absent next Sunday. One often is disposed to accuse circumstances of perversity or Providence of remissness in this matter. But preachers discover that when sermons are aimed definitely at a specific sin or at the production of a clearly portrayed grace, they hit many. One cannot say that faithful visiting of itself makes good preaching. Painstaking and constant study are indispensable, for these develop insight and powers of observation without which mere contact with people yields little, and they keep the mind supplied with stores of truth with which to meet the observed needs. But when in the study nothing comes, or comes with that insistency in which alone fruitful and forceful sermons are written, contact with men and women in the intimacy of the friendship accorded a trusted pastor will give vitality and point to that which before seemed inert. The first and most important thing about a sermon is not the subject but the object. Whatever the sermon's genesis —and sermons have varied origins, some in texts, some in subjects, some in experiences of the preacher, some in questions of the hour, some in observed needs in the congregation—it never is

in shape to be preached until the preacher has a definite purpose for which he is preaching it. In those sermons which rise out of a pastor's touch with his people, the specific object is clear from the beginning, and therefore such sermons usually are those which are at once felt to be helpful. The preacher who combines constant reading with constant calling is not likely to have his homiletic waters run dry.

Nor ought a pastor to neglect to ask counsel on what to preach from his fellow-workers. There are Sunday School teachers in closer touch with many of the young people than he is likely to be; wise parents who, when given the chance, will tell him the temptations to which boys and girls are exposed and difficulties they encounter in school and at business and in their sports and amusements; men and women leading clubs or guilds or societies who can supply him with lists of topics that need to be dealt with, and often with striking illustrative material. If he is in a charge where others besides himself are visiting in the homes—and happily our churches are coming to see that a staff of men and women of varied training and gifts, rather than one minister, or several ministers with the same education and functions, ought to be employed in urban parishes—he will do well to sit down with

them in conference over the needs which they and he have discovered, and plan out with them sermons or series of sermons for which they will furnish him many suggestions. It may seem a far cry from a prophet listening in secret to the still small voice and coming out of the solitude with a burden from the Most High to an administrator of a parish, gathering his staff about him, and eliciting their corporate wisdom on what the people should be taught. But God speaks no less through experienced and observant and informed workers than through inspirations which well up from the depths of a man's soul, and a preacher who is trying to be a teacher of religion, and a teacher of religion which is sufficiently many-sided and concretely applied to meet the needs of a varied congregation of several hundreds, and perhaps several thousands, will listen attentively for the voice of God from men and women as concerned and as responsible as he for their spiritual welfare. The sermon, when it comes to be preached, will be the man's own, shot through with his individuality, for he is sure to select from his colleagues what most appeals to him and what he can effectively handle; but he will prize fellow-workers who give him their confidence and frankly tell him what they have

found lacking in those to whom he and they minister.

Most ministers are not only pastors with personal contacts with their people, but also leaders of congregations whose corporate life and work it is theirs to guide. Protestantism has usually stressed the life of the individual with God and neglected the social embodiment of religion in the Church. This is less true in Scotland than in America, with its pathetic multiplication of sects. But with you as with us the preacher must hold up the ideal of the Christian Church—its necessity, its mission, its unity, its resources. Much of the modern treatment of Jesus passes over altogether His churchmanship. It is frequently said that He never founded a church nor evinced any interest in ecclesiastical organisation. This has created the impression that a follower of Jesus need not trouble himself about membership in the church, and that those ministers who devote time and thought to parish administration and ecclesiastical business are an inferior class of clergy, to be tolerated but despised, as many citizens look upon professional politicians. The free-lance with no responsibility for, or interest in, the religious institution is held up as the closest modern counterpart of Jesus of Nazareth.

But this is to lose sight of the highly organised Church into which He was born, whose fellowship He prized for the enrichment of His soul, and into whose work He threw himself as a teacher. His sharp criticism of its leaders and His constant controversy with them only bring out more clearly how interested He was in the institution which He thought they mismanaged and misled.

Preach, and preach sufficiently often, the churchmanship of Jesus: His loyalty to the institution to which He owed the heritage of His spirit; His appreciation of its synagogue-services and temple-festivals, even when He found in them much that was imperfect and faulty; His promptness in investing His own spiritual experience in the corporate life of the Church, witness the order of the narrative in the gospel according to St. Luke where the Baptism and Temptation are immediately followed by the return to Nazareth and the sermon in the synagogue, or the account of His taking up His headquarters in Capernaum and "straightway," as Mark's breathless narrative relates it, on the Sabbath entering into the synagogue and teaching. And whatever view one may take of the historicity or verbal accuracy of those passages in St. Matthew where the word "church" is placed on

Jesus' lips, it is indisputable that out of the Jewish Church He gathered about Himself a group of followers, in whom He developed a corporate consciousness, to whom He committed His cause and on whom He breathed His Spirit, so that He left them a fellowship magnificently capable of continuing His purpose. It was an admirably skilful and successful piece of organisation, with no waste effort on premature details of government or ritual or creed, details which would have cramped rather than aided its future growth and its adaptation to the varied life of mankind to this hour. St. Paul is not an incorrect interpreter of his Master when he writes, "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for it."

Again preach Jesus' sense of men's responsibility for the Church in any age or place. There is a striking text in the saying which He uses to those who controlled the temple in Jerusalem: "Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, *but ye have made it.*" He selects from a quantity of Scriptural ideals the one which sets forth prayer—personal intercourse with the Most High—as the supreme purpose of the Church; and the one which dwells on its inclusiveness—"for all the nations"—a perpetual rebuke to our class-bound

or race-restricted or creedally narrow or ritually rigid or ritually impoverished churches; and He insists that the Church with its divine ideal is ours to make, with the tragic possibility of making it utterly unlike God's plan.

The necessity of making a congregation inclusive may be stressed by one whose work for a quarter of a century and more has been in a city, where not only are the extremes of wealth and poverty, of education and illiteracy, of culture and crudity, to be faced, but where there is a cosmopolitan population from every corner of the globe, of whom but one in eight on Manhattan Island is entered on the census as a Protestant, so that "Ceylon's isle" of which we sing in Heber's hymn has a larger proportion of Protestant communicants among its inhabitants. You in Scotland have not our problems in races, in a babel of tongues, in vast masses with a Roman or a Jewish background, but there are few towns even with you where certain classes or sets of the population are not unchurched. In a lecture on preaching one cannot go into various forms of parish work which may open up contacts and convey the sense of the Church's interest and friendliness. But it is the preacher's task to make a congregation aware of its failures to embody to its community the hospitality and

outgoing friendship of Christ, to keep hammering away at the sins of snobbishness and cliquishness, of class-pride and class-interest, to plead for adaptability instead of rigid conventionalism in worship and work into which all churches inevitably tend to fall, to call on them to be daring in risking experiments (surely one new venture a year is not too much to ask a congregation to be willing to try!) and to insist that no church which does not express in its fellowship the inclusive heart of Christ can represent Him. There is a tactless way of talking about social inclusiveness from the pulpit which will make the members of a congregation only more vividly aware of social differences. But there is also a way of preaching fellowship in Christ, in whom (to use a fine phrase in Paul's Letter to the Colossians) "all hold together," so that a congregation becomes a homelike company of folk of all sorts and conditions, a household of the faith and purpose of Jesus Christ.

As was said in a previous lecture a principal note in the preaching of our generation must be social reconciliation. The peril of class warfare is as serious as is that of international strife; and the two are closely intertwined in their roots. The preaching of brotherhood will not be effective when the congregations to whom it is de-

livered do not make every effort to incarnate it in their own fellowship. This does not mean that all the members of a congregation must be congenial, eager to meet socially and with much to talk about when they so meet. Differences due to temperament, to education, to upbringing, to interests, are real differences and constitute social barriers. But if religion be not a major interest, breaking down or overleaping walls of partition and unifying a group of believers in mutual honour and understanding, it is not the Christian brand of religion found on the pages of the New Testament. Employers and employed, university folk and artisans, city visitors and dwellers in the mountains or at the seaside, whether they have much to say to each other or not—and talk is not the sign of the unity of the Spirit on which most emphasis is to be placed—all have the same need of intercourse with the pardoning and renewing and guiding God. They can be side by side in their communion with Him. The Church must be the supreme factor for social cohesion; that is part of its God-given task; and it can never be that unless in its congregations men and women who else would never meet and appreciate one another are together in prayer and in service.

As ministers we must look over the folk within

reach of our churches and note carefully those groups for whom the church seems to have no appeal. We must face our sessions and other church-workers with the problem. We must prepare our people to give up methods of conducting the church which render it less welcoming to them that are without. In many communities rented sittings, for example, and especially sittings rented at prices varying with the supposed desirability of their location, are an offence to working folk. We must make our congregations willing to try new methods, and methods which may not suit their taste, if by any means we may gain these unshepherded people. We must be ready to give over our own preferred ways of preaching and of conducting public worship if we find that they do not reach those without our ecclesiastical background. When George McDonald was beginning his ministry, he wrote to his father: "Perhaps my manner is too quiet to please dissenters commonly. However, I must not do violence to the nature God has given me." To which his father replied, pointing out that his maternal grandmother was born duck-footed, and he asked: "Was the doctor doing violence to the nature God had given her when he set free the little toes from their bondage?" Congregations must be induced to take on additional serv-

ices, or materially to alter one of those already in existence, and in many instances induced to increase their contributions to provide for more social facilities and for more employed workers, in order that the church may serve its entire neighborhood. And behind whatever means are used must be a clear and cogent preaching of this ideal of a comprehensive church, bodying forth to the community social solidarity in Christ. If we had congregations of that kind all over the land, the divisive economic and industrial questions of the hour would be discussed in a very different atmosphere. The Church of Christ is not endowed with specific solutions for these problems; but she is commissioned to bring folk of all sorts and conditions into such fellowship with one another in God that they face their differences with mutual respect and confidence and sympathy, and with a supreme desire to serve the commonweal.

Nor must adaptability be thought of only in connection with differing social classes. We must not let our people or ourselves lose sight of inevitable differences to be found in every community in types of mind and in matters of taste. If church unity is not to be an iridescent dream, but realised in parish churches, which in one institution serve their entire neighborhood, we

must prepare office-bearers and people to expect a church to supply various types of worship and of meetings for discussion and instruction. We cannot forecast the forms that will be needed; they must grow of themselves, and alter from time to time. But it is for us preachers to induce our inevitably traditional church folk to welcome changes or additions, provided these make the church more congenial to religiously wistful outsiders. A useful text is Peter's reply to the vision at Joppa: "Not so, Lord, for I have never." A living and growing church must be plastic, adapting itself so far as it can both to them that are within and to them that are without. There is a rich sermon in the text: "Give no occasion of stumbling either to Jews (the ethically-minded outsiders), or to Greeks (the intelligentsia and the æsthetes), or to the church of God (those who are most developed in their touch with the unseen and most sensitive in their use of the mind of Christ)." And there is another sermon equally needed in our Lord's sense of proportion, who when He was pleading for new wine-skins for new wine, remembered those who were entirely satisfied with their old wine, and bade us recall that they found it "good."

There are a number of congregational con-

cerns which a preacher must bear in mind and handle adequately from the pulpit. One is the training of the people in systematic and proportionate giving. Many preachers shrink from what are called "begging sermons." Unquestionably it is a mistake to ask for money too often. A well-known New York minister was told by a well-to-do parishioner that while he hoped his pastor would long continue in health and vigour, he had selected a text to suggest for his memorial sermon, and the text was: "It came to pass that the beggar died." The minister replied: "Ah, you must finish the text: 'and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died, and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.'" None the less it is a mistake to beg too often; but the annual presentation of the church's budget (if that be your custom, and it is a businesslike custom) affords a splendid opportunity to hold up before a congregation the ideal of the church in the community, to speak of what their own church is doing and might do, to quicken their vision, to enlist their service and to evoke their generosity. When one thinks of the benefactions made today by persons of wealth to education, to hospitals, to various charities, to scientific research, to music and art, the amounts given by

them to spread religion appear relatively meagre. One is drawn in some congregations to preach from the text: "Thou shalt behold the affliction of My habitation in all the wealth which God shall give Israel." Probably it is a happy circumstance that the Church generally is supported not by the large benefactions of the rich, but by the constant giving of those of moderate means and of the poor. But a larger proportion of the total wealth of Christian communities ought certainly to go to the spread of convictions and ideals. It is the preacher's task to train a congregation to set aside a proportion of their incomes or wages, and a proportion which is representative of their devotion to the Church for which Christ gave Himself.

And this leads immediately to another theme —the recruiting of workers for the activities carried on by the congregation and by neighbouring religious and social agencies. We believe that it is in a man's ordinary occupation in life that he finds his holy ministry for the kingdom of God. But many of our people must take on additional service, if the work of Christ is to be done. In these days when life has become so much more mobile, with week-end jaunts and frequent travel, it is not easy to induce our ablest people to tie themselves down to tasks which

must be done regularly. Perhaps the most important ministry committed to the Church is the spiritual training of children and young people. Those who volunteer as teachers are frequently persons with scanty education and gifts. It may be better with you, but with us it is often a source of regret that college men and women hold back from the arduous and confining work of voluntary religious teaching. A preacher is sent to such texts as: "Their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord." "For that the leaders took the lead in Israel." "Very able men for the work of the service of the house of God." "To whom much is given, of him shall much be required." There are far too many in all our congregations who give of their means, but never give of themselves, to lead others into the Christian life. A preacher has to keep telling them that in the highest service there is no substitute for self. *Il faut payer de sa personne,* which we may put into our colloquial speech: "It has to be taken out of us." Such work as Paul did at Rome in gaining Onesimus for Christ is a repetition of the self-emptying of the Incarnation, and illustrates that supreme mystery: "Whom I have sent back to thee in his own person, that is, my very heart." Those who teach in Sunday Schools or who in any other capacity try to

mould characters after the likeness of Jesus must be faced with the apostle's bold and apt metaphor: "My little children, of whom I am in travail until Christ be formed in you." All spiritual work in the Church is like that of the group of Levites to whom no wagons or cattle were assigned by Moses: "Unto the sons of Kohath he gave none, because the service of the sanctuary belonged unto them; they bare it upon their shoulders." Any who have to do with the service of the sanctuary of men's minds, helping them to think through their questions, or of the sanctuary of their hearts, assisting with sympathy, or of the sanctuary of their consciences, bearing with them their sins and leading them to penitence and to clean and vigorous life, can be furnished with no labour-saving appliances. They must offer themselves in living sacrifice. It is a preacher's duty to press home self-draining work for Christ, until those in his congregation who excuse themselves from it are made exceedingly uncomfortable.

A third duty of the preacher is to inform his people of the world-wide work of the Church. Once a year most ministers preach a missionary sermon in connection with an offering or with the taking of pledges for the support of the Church's enterprise in non-Christian lands. But

missions surely ought not to be connected always with a collection. They are a very fruitful source of instruction for vigorous and devoted Christian living. American historians have made much of the influence of the frontier upon the character of our national life. There have always been robust and forceful inspirations coming back to the more settled sections of the country from those rougher places where the pioneers were doing their work. It is so in the Christian Church. There is no likelier means of rousing a congregation to self-spending service than by keeping before them what their representatives are doing and bearing in non-Christian lands. They will be moved to a sense of honour akin to that voiced in Uriah's fine reply to David: "My lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open field; shall I then go into my house, to eat and drink?" A preacher will find at least one rich series of biographical sermons in the careers of outstanding missionaries—of whom sons of Scotland have been among the greatest—a series fully as inspiring as any on Bible characters, and full of suggestion of the reinforcements to be found in God and the exploits those who know Him can achieve. There is instruction in a series which surveys the living religions of the world today, with appre-

ciation of the needs of the soul met by each and the truth which it stresses, and the correction and consummation of them all in Christ. We are living in a time when the so-called heathen are among the keenest critics of our faith in its national and industrial expressions, or rather non-expressions. A preacher finds a telling approach to some of our social sins in the caustic comments of those to whom we are sending missionaries. It is very evident that we must take our Christianity much more seriously, or the non-Christian world will not take it at all. People need to be reminded that the Great Commission does not read, "Make disciples out of all nations," as though saved individuals were our whole mission, but "make the nations disciples." Not only in sermons devoted to missions, but in many another sermon, let the people have a glimpse of the world-wide ministry of the Church, and of the demand this makes on all Christians.

Still another kindred matter for the preacher's attention is to keep before his communicants, older and younger, their obligations as members of the Christian Church. Most ministers have a class in which for several months, or for at least a period of weeks, they instruct would-be communicants. But when they take their public

vows, a pastor's special responsibility for them does not end. We spoke a moment ago of the corporate consciousness which Jesus developed in His disciples, and which fitted them for their mission. A similar consciousness of being set apart for a distinctive purpose with all-sufficient resources at their disposal for its fulfilment must be reproduced in the members of the Church in every generation. Preachers must remind them of their calling in Christ Jesus. It will not do to let them take their standards from the life about them, nor to think that they have no meat to eat which the world knows not of. Such phrases as "So shall it not be among you;" "What do ye more than others?" "Be not conformed to this world," "Hereunto were ye called because Christ suffered," and the like must be embedded in their consciences. It is the custom of one minister to make the pre-communion service at the outset of the season a time when he asks by personal letter every young communicant who has been received into the fellowship of the Church within the last three years to be present, and when he takes up the vows they made and speaks on some aspect of the distinctive life and work and reinforcements of Christians. The ideal of the Church given in the metaphors Paul uses in his letter to the Ephesians—the Body of

Christ, the Commonwealth of Saints, the Habitation of the Spirit, the Bride of Christ—or the names applied to followers of Jesus in the New Testament—disciples, brethren, believers, saints, those of the Way—are typical themes; or some large text which sets forth both the privileges and responsibilities of believers. There is always a danger that membership in the Church shall mean too little. We do not want it to include any who are not seriously taking for their own the mind of Christ towards God and man.

And this leads to another subject for the preacher—the conception of one comprehensive Christian Church. Presbyterianism historically has had that ideal. Our forefathers at the Reformation planned constitutions for national or city churches which were designed to embrace in their ministry and membership all whom they deemed true Christian ministers and believers. They were sometimes mistaken in the tests by which they determined worthiness of the Christian name; but this was their ideal. Throughout our history, however, we have been haunted by another conception—that of a witnessing Church. The conception is in many respects a noble one; and we cannot withhold our admiration from those who through the centuries have borne their testimony in the face of hardship and

persecution, and at the cost of parting from brethren. But this witnessing has often been attended by an intolerant self-righteousness, by an undue emphasis upon opinions and disregard of love, and by a divisive spirit. Our Presbyterian history is a succession of splits and reunions. We in the United States have had almost as many as you have in Scotland. And when one studies dispassionately those in our American Presbyterianism (I hazard no judgment on Scottish Church history), they all seem mistakes, which were detrimental to the Church's life and work, and which subsequent generations had painfully to repair. Some of them have been repaired; and the reunited Church has always made room within herself for both views in the controversy which caused the disruption, showing that a like tolerance at the time would have rendered the division needless. Today, in a land like my own, one cannot see what distinctive contribution Presbyterianism as such makes to the Christian cause to justify the continuance of a separate Presbyterian Church alongside of other churches equally Christian. Canada has taken a stride towards a more inclusive Protestant Church, and we cannot help regretting that so many Presbyterians have stayed out of the union. The Canadian attempt at a combined Church

seems the most promising sign on the ecclesiastical horizon. But the goal of our hearts' desire is not yet in sight. It is the duty of preachers to make possible the coming of the reunited world-wide Church of Christ, super-national so that she may exercise her function of holding mankind in one fellowship, and flexible in her organisation to meet the differing requirements of our infinitely varied humanity. Those of us who felt the tragic impotence of the Christian Church in the crisis of the World War, those of us who know at first hand the wasteful and crippling folly of an inevitably competing denominationalism, those of us who have had to battle for reasonable freedom within our own communion and have seen the cruel blunders of the deposition from the ministry of eminent and devout scholars and of the closing of pulpits to God-owned preachers of the Gospel, know the urgency of rearing a generation of churchmen who count the possession of the Spirit of Jesus Christ the sole essential, and who frankly expect differences of theology and variety in modes of worship and vast diversity in methods of work within the hospitable Church which His Spirit rules and unites. If such a Church is ever to bless our earth (and please God it shall) preachers dare not keep quiet about it. We

must teach it as the New Testament ideal, which it certainly is, and prepare people to hail its advent.

Both for the local congregation and for the Church universal the preacher needs to dwell on what the seer of Patmos in his message to the Church at Ephesus calls "The first works." He praises that Church, you remember, for its missionary zeal, its steadfastness under persecution, its orthodoxy, but he has this against it: "thou didst leave thy first love," by which he means not loyalty to Christ but love of men. The "first works" for a Christian Church are always those of love. One recalls that another apostle, writing to believers in this same district, prays that they may be "rooted and grounded in love." That is the source of insight and the wellspring of usefulness and unity. One of the most original and profound theologians Scotland produced in the last century, himself a victim of the narrow and rigid conception of the Church's witness to its confession, John McLeod Campbell, a masterly interpreter of the cross of Christ, wrote in his later days:—

"The clear apprehension of the love of God, as God's revelation of Himself to every man in the Atonement—this faith to which I was brought

soon after I became a minister—saved me from an alienation from evangelical religion. I cannot now speak of all the ways in which I have been made to prove the holding power of this sheet anchor, but it enabled me to exercise patience, and made me quick to hear and slow to speak. Secure in this fundamental faith I could afford to wait for light on secondary matters. Also this grand root faith" (he is using St. Paul's very metaphor) "gave me what to teach and what to cherish, and that fellowship in the long suffering of God, and His painstaking with men, that has so often saved me from breaking, or risking a breaking, with others, because of anything that was a difference in our measures of light. Thus, while called a 'heretic,' I have been saved from the reality of heresy, and have been enabled 'to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' "

That is the temper for us as preachers and leaders of the Church, and the spirit we are to inculcate in our congregations.

At no place does a minister's office supply him with more immediately stimulating matter for preaching than when he administers the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Something may be said for the observance of this sacrament without a sermon. The symbols themselves are eloquent, and at the Lord's Table the communicants be-

come preachers, proclaiming the Lord's death until He come. In celebrating the Communion in the sick-room or in the home of some shut-in one discovers how appropriately the Feast may be kept with no word of man save those in prayer, and with a selection of warming and strengthening words of Scripture. Those of us who served with the troops overseas, where most varied types of Christian—Quaker, Roman Catholic, Unitarian, Christian Scientists, together with the more usual sorts of Evangelicals—would meet in the Communion, found it wiser to refrain from any address of our own, lest unwittingly we intrude something divisive, and we found the language of the Bible amply sufficient to stir minds and hearts to remember and receive the one Saviour and Lord. But for the usual public administration of the Lord's Supper, a brief, moving, devout discourse is an aid in creating the spiritual atmosphere, in which souls lift themselves to God and are aware of His coming to them in Christ in His fulness.

Such sermons ought to be short; fifteen minutes is long enough. Communicants ought not to arrive mentally wearied at the quiet moments of symbolically aided fellowship. The sermon should confine itself to vital personal religion in the strictest sense. The Lord's Supper,

at the close of a service occupied with some other theme entirely in keeping at other times, is robbed of its rightful setting amid the intimacies of the Upper Room. The sermon ought not to be primarily instructive, however much light it may throw by the way, for we have other occasions for learning, and are now come to experience—to realise God's gracious presence with us in Christ and His supply of every need of ours out of His unsearchable riches. The sermon ought not to deal mainly with our obligations, or even with our penitence and faith; for we are not there to recall ourselves, but Christ, and the sermon should face us with Him. Its purpose is to move—to arouse thought, to kindle imagination, to touch feeling, to enlist conscience, to commit the whole man to Him who gives Himself unreservedly to us.

Probably you will not find that communion sermons are difficult to prepare; certainly they are not hard to find, and one is less likely here than anywhere else to become "preached out." The symbolism of the Lord's Supper illustrates in a vivid and poignant way almost any text which voices the Gospel. One may venture here on the greatest texts, texts which are beyond us at other times, for we do not attempt to explore them but to give glimpses down vistas and up to

heights, and let the minds of communicants pursue what paths they will towards God as the text reveals Him. Its symbolism connects itself with the sacraments of our human life—with home and friendship, with suffering and redemption, with memory and hope, with sentiment and loyalty, with refreshment and replenishment, with love that constrains and ennobles and transfigures. It fits in with the sacraments which Jesus Himself employed for His soul's sustenance. Have you ever thought how He went from the Upper Room to Gethsemane to use there the same elements of which He had made for His disciples a sacrament at the Table? There was the association of physical objects—the garden where He ofttimes resorted. There was comradeship with kindred believers—He taketh with Him Peter, James and John. There was prayer—the upreach of the spirit beyond things seen or felt or heard to lay hold on God and find strength to do and bear His fatherly will. The Lord's Supper is poetry in action. The sermon that puts our souls in tune for it must be picturesque throughout, lyric in language, awakening fancy until the eyes of the heart are enlightened to see the Invisible.

Pastoral preaching—it is a clumsy title, to be left with another apology for its awkwardness;

but let it serve to remind us that a minister's other duties, as the pastor and the administrator of a church, are not troublesome interferences with his work in the pulpit, to be got through with as cheaply in time and effort as may be that he may give himself to preaching. They are rather enrichments of his pulpit work, to be kept in their proportionate places, but furnishing him with themes, with acquaintance with men, with the right to speak with authority, and with responsibilities in the Church of God which prove themselves inspiring teachers of him who must teach his brethren in the household of faith.

LECTURE V

EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

LECTURE V

EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

As we take up our concluding subject—evangelistic preaching—we come clearly upon one element which must be present in all preaching, and which differentiates it from teaching. Preaching aims at an immediate result. A teacher has as definite an objective, but he travels towards it at a more leisurely pace. Not every lecture is designed to alter its auditors; but preaching proposes to make men different. The preacher sets himself to do something in and with the persons who sit before him. At the start of one's ministry, it is a good plan, for one's own benefit, to write at the top of one's manuscript what one expects to accomplish with a sermon: "To bring fearless serenity through trust in a fatherly God;" "To wake to clear thinking on God's claims and to forthright resolve to meet them;" "To present Christ crucified as the symbol of God's nature and of the life to which His children are called." The most damaging criticism which can be levelled at any sermon is that the preacher was aiming at

nothing in particular and proving himself an accurate shot. The most telling sermons usually have their origin in something which a preacher wishes his people to realise or to do. And it is never something which he hopes may come to pass in them years hence. To be sure, there are often unconscionable intervals between spiritual seedtime and harvest, and the fruits of many an earnest preacher's ministry do not appear until life matures ideas and impulses and loyalties which he implanted. But there would be no such fruits had not the preacher sent his hearers out Sunday after Sunday different by some small increment of conscience or by some new direction of soul from the men and women who entered the church.

A preacher is one who teaches religion to make his listeners forthwith religious. He has life to impart which should be immediately contagious. There is ever a note of urgency in preaching. That was what Baxter had in mind when he spoke as "a dying man to dying men." Both preacher and people should expect something to happen, and something momentous, because they face each other for half an hour, while he faces himself and them with the living God in Christ. Phillips Brooks, in a memorable phrase, described preaching as "truth through person-

ality;" but his description omits an indispensable factor—the immediate object. Preaching is truth through personality to constrain consciences at once.

To that extent all preaching worthy the name is evangelistic—specifically intended to make disciples of those who hear it. But inasmuch as most congregations are largely composed of those who in varying degrees are already followers of Christ, not all preaching is aimed at commitment to Him. Preachers should bear in mind the occasional outsider who may happen in, or the perfunctory church-goer who sits listlessly through the service, and put something into most sermons for their special benefit. But there is a danger in too frequent appeals to close with Christ. They must never become a convention with the preacher himself, for he must be genuinely moved if he is to move others; and congregations soon reach a saturation point and cease being affected.

But every church has an obligation to non-Christians within its reach. There are young people who have been brought up without religious training, and others who have revolted from the unwise or faulty form in which they received it, or have drifted out of touch with church or Sunday School. There are men and

women in middle life or old age morally unawakened and empty in soul. There are those who have lapsed from an earlier faith, or have been carried by circumstances into unreligious circles of thought and feeling. And there are the victims of tragedies, both those who have been their own enemies and those who have been shipwrecked by the folly or wrong-doing of others. Few churches today have not far more folk around them than are ever within their walls.

When a minister is planning his year's work, he cannot close his eyes to these who are not likely to come to hear him unless means are taken to get hold of them. He and his office-bearers may arrange a series of special services. Sometimes the church will be used; and sometimes another building, like a theatre or hall, seems more neutral territory. This is not the place to go into the methods of evangelism; we are concerned with the preaching only. Occasionally the pastor can take such a series of services himself; more often he will find it wise to invite in another speaker, because the people are accustomed to his own message, and a stranger puts the Gospel freshly and releases the pastor to devote himself to personal calls and interviews. Such missions, which run for a week or

a fortnight or even for a longer period, bring religion conspicuously to the attention of a community. They have a cumulative effect. They supply an occasion for earnest Christians to speak with indifferent neighbours or kinsfolk and get them within range of the Christian message. Or the minister may take his more active workers into his confidence, and let them know that for a certain number of Sunday mornings or evenings he will focus his preaching on a presentation of Christianity to the non-Christian or the very slightly Christian, and obtain their assistance in procuring the attendance of those seldom at church.

Whether the pastor be himself the preacher, or some other minister be invited, it is important that the preaching be free from the defects which have deservedly brought evangelism widely into disrepute:—

(1) Its message has been associated with a negative ethic. There have been flaming denunciations of current vices; and these have worked for righteousness; but there have also been often as uncompromising attacks upon popular forms of amusement which in themselves are not vicious —dancing, the stage, various sports—with a consequent moral confusion. And denunciations of evil have been commoner than proclamations of

the more excellent way. The impression gets abroad that an earnest Christian is to be known by what he does not do. No doubt evil lends itself more readily to dramatic speech than good, and criticism is easier than constructive teaching; but an evangel which is not positive in its setting forth of the life of love is not the evangel of Jesus. The preacher who is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the most doughty assailant of sin.

(2) Again its message is far too often tied up with an obsolete theology. Allowance must be made for evangelists who have been so engrossed in bringing sinners to Christ by the Gospel in its traditional form that they have had neither time nor inclination to readapt its presentation in the light of more recent scholarship. So long as they are tolerant in spirit, one would utter no syllable of criticism of their splendid service. Indeed our criticism should be reserved for men of modern theological training who lack evangelistic interest and seem impotent to preach convertingly. But it is not impossible to combine keen thinking and fervent passion. One recalls the outstanding heralds of Christ through the centuries, who have turned communities upside down and enthroned Christ over selfish lives—a Paul, an Augustine, a Francis, a Wiclif, a Luther, a Calvin, a

Knox, an Edwards, a Chalmers—and they were theological innovators, men with a fresh grasp of the Gospel in the light of the knowledge of their day, as well as men of an ardent devotion to Christ. The most serious reproach of those who pride themselves on being abreast of current advances in thought is that so pitiably few of them use their learning to preach Christ infectiously and transformingly.

(3) A third and closely allied defect in recent evangelistic preaching has been the vagueness of its goal. Men have been pled with to "accept Christ" without being told what that means. They have understood it to involve eschewing gross indulences like unchastity and drunkenness, conforming to current social standards of righteousness, holding the generally accepted Christian beliefs and loyally cultivating the ecclesiastical virtues such as Sabbath observance, church-going and private devotions. But admirable as all this is, it is scarcely what the New Testament means by being "found in Christ" with a heart wrapped up in the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven. To what are men converted, saved, born again? what is the more abundant life?—that is the essential point. It must be made clear in any evangelistic preaching which merits the Christian name.

(4) And a fourth criticism, to which this at once leads, is that it has been too individualistic. Its preachers have visualised souls as isolated units, instead of seeing human beings in their social relations. It has preached Christ apart from the kingdom of God which He preached and for which He died. Its converts have not infrequently been poor citizens, unpleasant relatives and sharp dealers in business affairs. It is as necessary to preach fidelity as to preach faith; or rather, not to set forth social responsibilities is to omit the most cogent spur to religion and to leave closed the only door by which many persons will ever enter fellowship with God. Some men find God through their social obligations, and others come to assume social obligations by first finding God. Side by side in successive verses in the genealogy of our Lord in St. Matthew's Gospel are two women, outsiders to the religion of Israel, who entered the household of faith through opposite doors. Rahab, the harlot and traitress of her city, came through faith—a mystic sense of the Divine behind the invaders of Jericho, and Ruth, the devoted daughter-in-law, came through faithfulness, and it is the Ruths whom evangelists forget. A message which does not set forth the Christian social order and win men to be its devotees omits half the Gospel.

Whatever may have been the insight in her spiritual nature which led Rahab to welcome the enemies of her people, she, the harlot, is at length the wife of one of the progenitors of David and his greater Son.

Evangelism, which is the supreme duty of the Christian preacher, ought not to be left to men of lesser educational advantages, who are more apt to interpret the Gospel in these imperfect, and sometimes misleading, ways. God forbid that we should not acknowledge with profound thanksgiving the marvellous service rendered by evangelists of scanty culture but large common sense and glorious consecration. Yet it is a task which trained ministers dare not demit, however readily we welcome those from time to time raised up with special gifts although without fullest education. We must expect so to enlist our people and lead our church's efforts that part of our time every year we are facing lives not under the sway of Christ and preaching with the definite aim of gaining their allegiance.

Nor dare we lay exclusive stress on preaching. Success depends even more on the extent to which minister and people prepare for and follow up the work of the pulpit by personal talks with men and women. There is no substitute for the interview face to face. Nor can the first

approach to many elements in our population be made through an invitation to some large meeting; they are much more effectively reached through small gatherings in a home or in a club-room. Here as in so many other relations one cannot sunder the work of the preacher from the task of the pastor who deals with individuals and the leader of his people who inspires and guides them to bring lives one by one under Christ's control.

But all this is auxiliary to a public presentation of the Gospel. And when a preacher prepares for this duty, what kind of sermon will he preach?

First, he will select great and moving themes: —*great* themes which take men into the heart of the Christian faith. It is a not uncommon mistake to fancy that evangelistic preaching should not tax men's intellects but warm their emotions. One has heard evangelists who strung a series of anecdotes on the slenderest thread of thought. Anecdotes which illustrate the subject are by no means to be disparaged, but one pleads for a subject worth illustrating. Or there is the evangelistic sermon which is a continuous appeal, "a gush of feeling in a rush of words." Benjamin Whichcoate voiced the experience of thoughtful hearers when he said: "I have always found such

preaching of others hath most commanded my heart which hath most illuminated my head." Historically the revivals of Christian faith have all been associated with the preaching of some mighty conviction. Preaching that would bring men to decision must grip the mind. Let the preacher choose for evangelistic sermons the most august and mastering religious thought he knows.

And *moving* themes. Someone described preaching as "truth carried into the heart by passion;" and the passion must be not only in the preacher, but in the subject of his discourse. Let him choose an affecting message. We need not be afraid of too much emotion provided the theme itself does the moving. Many of us find Dr. Channing confessing that of which our consciences accuse us when he enters in his diary: "I am sensible of a want of tenderness in my preaching. I want to preach striking, rather than melting, sermons." Whether we speak of them as melting or as kindling, we want subjects which raise men's natures to a high temperature, for only at that heat are they malleable, and will receive the impress of Christ.

Every generation has points of insensibility and does not respond to certain appeals of Christianity which have gone home to the conscience

of other periods. Nor would one venture to say what elements in the Christian message most stir the men of our time. But by way of illustration we may look at several approaches to the hearts of our contemporaries.

One is a clear portrayal of the spiritual alternatives. What is the prospect for the individual and for society on a non-Christian basis? Suppose the materialistic interpretation of life seem convincing, let a man look its implications honestly in the eyes. You recall Jean Paul Richter's dream, in which he fancies the dead Christ returning to say that there is no God, and you have read James Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night.* Or listen to a man of a very different type, one who constantly brought laughter to men's faces, Mark Twain, as he contemplates life seriously:—

"A myriad of men are born; they labor and sweat and struggle for bread; they squabble and scold and fight; they scramble for little mean advantages over each other. Age creeps upon them; infirmities follow; those they love are taken from them. At length ambition is dead; pride is dead; longing for release is in their place. It comes at last—the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them—and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence. Then

another myriad takes their place, and copies all they did, and goes along the same profitless road, and vanishes as they vanished—to make room for another and another and a million more myriads to follow the same arid path through the same desert and accomplish what the first myriad and all the myriads that came after it accomplished —nothing."

Let a preacher as vividly confront complacent unbelievers with the logic of their position. Are they willing to live by it? to have their children live by it? to see the community basing its life upon it? If it be true, one should not whine nor protest but follow out the consequences open-eyed. But can one settle down into this view of existence? If not, why? Against this background let the preacher place the spiritual nature of man:—

> Strange that we creatures of the petty ways,
> Poor prisoners behind these fleshly bars,
> Can sometimes think us thoughts with God ablaze,
> Touching the fringes of the outer stars.

Then let him as vividly sketch the life followers of Christ discover through Him in this same universe which others proclaim godless, and plead for a serious attempt to give life the trust

and service of Christ, and see whether there be not a response which vindicates His faith.

Another is a plain and graphic statement of the results of sin, and an equally plain and graphic statement of the life to which man is redeemed by Christ. It is not an approach peculiar to our time, but one for which our time has been specially prepared by an experience of a world-judgment. General William Booth said: "The best preaching is Damnation with the cross in the midst of it." Let the preacher paint concretely the effects of Christless motives on homes and industry and politics, and on the characters of men—that is Damnation, here or hereafter. You may recall the sentences in which our veteran novelist, Thomas Hardy, dismisses the two clerical brothers as negligible factors in those scenes of human pathos and tragedy through which Clare and Tess are passing: "Perhaps as with many good men their opportunities of observation were not as good as their opportunities of expression. Neither had an adequate conception of the complicated forces at work outside the smooth and gentle current on which they and their associates floated." No one would demand that ministers be swept on a rough and flooding torrent; they could not do a tithe of their expected stint of work. But mov-

ing abroad in life where we see men and women shipwrecked, and wrecking themselves, we cannot help preaching damnation: "The wages of sin is death," "Without God and without hope"; and as ministers of Christ preaching: "The free gift of God is eternal life," "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

Still another approach is the naturalness of faith. You will remember the passage in Stevenson's *Ebb Tide* where Herrick resolves to let himself down into the water and drown, and finds that he cannot stop swimming. An irresistible instinct compelled him to move his hands and his feet and keep afloat. The patriarch of Uz discovered a similar imperious impulse of spiritual self-preservation when, convinced that God was against him, he could not refrain from praying, and said in justification of his seeming folly: "Howbeit doth not one stretch out the hand in his fall?" Let men see themselves in situations where they cannot help reaching out and up. After his wife's death Leslie Stephen wrote to Mr. Lowell: "I thank—" and remembering that he had no God, went on, "I thank—something—that I loved her as heartily as I know how to love." Let them see others to whose forced cry answers came, and who were made more than conquerors. Herrick's impulse to

swim had behind it ages of experience in which creatures had found this the means of remaining alive in the water. Job's instinctive outreach of soul for fellowship with the Invisible had behind it a like ancestry. Is this not cogent proof that man's spirit finds faith life-preserving, and in faith takes hold of upbearing reality—the living God? Why sink and perish with such help at hand? Why stumble and fall when with God one can walk upright?

Or another approach is the corresponding truth of the inescapable God. Men are continually attempting to elude Him; but do they ever succeed? Through thought, through beauty, through conscience, through love, how He breaks in upon them! One of our brilliant younger New York architects underwent sudden tragic disaster in the death of his wife, and shortly thereafter published a sonnet in which he pictures Beauty as saying:—

He that keeps faith with me will surely find
  My substance in the shadows on the deep,
  My spirit in the courage that men keep
Though all the stars burn out and Heaven goes blind.
  When sorrow smites thee, look! my joy is near,
  Flashing like sunlight on a falling tear.

How supremely all these appeals seem summed up in Christ! Can we wrench ourselves away from Him, and have done with Him? If one cannot elude this haunting Figure, how can He be let find us and made Friend and Saviour and Lord?

Yet another approach is the sense of futility. It is often remarked that few persons nowadays are conscious of guilt and that most only rarely crave communion with the Unseen; but countless men and women, even in youth and more intensely as years advance, are dogged by a feeling of their uselessness. The lost coin, out of circulation, seems the symbol of themselves to more men than the lost sheep or the lost son. The pessimism of much of our current fiction, and the depression revealed in the published letters or personal utterances of many of those rated successful, is witness of this mood. Let the preacher present Christ as the Interpreter who gives life meaning, and the Utiliser of all one's powers. A second-century Christian used a significant phrase when he described faith to his friend, Diognetus, as "this new interest which has entered men's lives."

Or again one may present the Christian programme for the world and for the individual. It has usually been assumed that men are first won by Christ's person and then adopt His purpose:

but there are not a few today who are first drawn to the cause, and then to Him as the Leader who can achieve it. Such a sermon must handle very specifically what Christ proposes, and men must be made to see life as He wills it. If this be that which they also will, if this has their heart even when their will is weak, can they hold back and can they refuse to be partners with Him?

Or the preacher may take for his theme the satisfactions of the life with Christ—the combinations of venture and security, of living at one's wit's end and of being guided, of facing the impossible and feeling adequate, of isolation and friendship with God. And this is but a fragmentary glimpse of "the joy of the Lord" into which the disciple is admitted.

In a previous lecture it was said that the cross was the supremely cogent appeal. The recrudescence in our time of the demand for self-expression, of the protest against irksome obligations, makes its message an offence. The impossibility of attaining the ideal to which it constrains leads to rebellion of spirit. A contemporary poetess has voiced this admirably, and the invincible might which triumphs. The lines are not yet in our anthologies, and may perhaps be unfamiliar. *PANTAS ELKUSO*, she entitles them:—

Go, bitter Christ, grim Christ! haul if Thou wilt
Thy bloody cross to Thine own bleak Calvary!
When did I bid Thee suffer for my guilt
To bind intolerable claims on me?
I loathe Thy sacrifice; I am sick of Thee.

They say Thou reignest from the cross, Thou dost,
And like a tyrant. Thou dost rule by tears,
Thou womanish Son of woman. Cease to thrust
Thy sordid tale of sorrows in my ears,
Jarring the music of my few short years.

I am battered and broken and weary and out of heart,
I will not hear of talk of heroic things,
But be content to play some simple part,
Freed from preposterous, wild imaginings . . .
Men were not meant to walk as priests and kings.

Thou liest, Christ, Thou liest; take it hence,
That mirror of strange glories; I am I:
What wouldst Thou make of me? O cruel pretence,
Drive me not mad with the mockery
Of that most lovely, unattainable lie!

O King, O Captain, wasted, wan with scourging,
Strong beyond speech, and wonderful with woe,
Whither, relentless wilt Thou still be urging
Thy maimed and halt that have not strength to go? . . .
Peace, peace, I follow. Why must we love Thee so?

These few approaches, at which we have been hastily looking, may serve to illustrate the point of starting with a subject which leads us to the heart of the Christian faith. Preachers are often surprised at the sermons which appear to produce immediate decisions. Those carefully prepared for the purpose frequently fail, while those which had other ends in view seem to touch an answering chord in some listener and to bring him to resolute action. People differ widely in that to which they respond; and preachers never know the silent work of the always active Spirit of God, for which the best we say is only the most fractional supplement. But experience teaches us that it is the big themes, which afford large glimpses of God in Christ and which go down into the depths of conscience and unloose the usually repressed flow of sentiment, which shake men out of their lethargy and impel them to decisive courses.

Second, he will seek a haunting or a wooing text. To be sure if he be preaching to a company of non-church-goers in an unecclesiastical environment—a theatre or a park or a street-corner—there is much to be said for beginning with a story or with a contemporary happening which is in their minds, rather than with a verse of the Bible. But even so, he will usually find

some pointed Scripture invaluable to fasten in their minds. And if he be preaching in a church where a text is the expected commencement of the sermon, he will look for one that will grip his hearers the moment he reads it.

Suppose he is after fairly constant churchgoers who have never found in their religion deliverance from their moral infirmities, and who remain in helpless invalidism while apparently within reach of the springs of healing, what a text lies at his hand in the verse: "And a certain man was there who had been thirty and eight years in his infirmity." The evangelist may well have been thinking of those who had been frequenters of some cult in Ephesus or hearers at a synagogue, when he stressed this man's long and disappointed waiting. He pictures Jesus passing by others and going straight for him. He gives us the man's pathetic explanation so often repeated in the experience of others, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool." And in Jesus' threefold saying, bidding the man in faith use at once his own long paralysed powers, "Arise;" do away with the possibility of relapsing into his invalidism, "Take up thy bed;" and instead of beginning with a convalescent's timid first efforts, start off at the pace of vigorous health: "Walk"—there is the whole process of cure.

Whether the preacher employs all the context—and in this incident it is hard to see how he could do better—the text at once arrests and is calculated to remain in the memory: "A certain man was there who had been thirty and eight years in his infirmity."

Or suppose the preacher has in mind those who slip from childhood into young manhood, and from young manhood into middle years, with an interest in the Christian religion, but never taking seriously Christ's demands upon them, how poignantly true in their experience he can make the text: "Me ye have not always." "Lo, I am with you alway"—yes, but our impressibility comes and goes. The Christ who appeals to children, the Christ who meets us on the threshold of responsible life, the Christ who comes to us in our various experiences—love, perplexity, sorrow, shame—comes saying: "Not always." Let him take those two words and toll them like a bell, until they ring in the conscience of those who put off the decisive act of self-commitment to Christ.

Or suppose he is thinking of those for whom the Christian religion is associated with stodgy folk and static morals, solidly good but never thrilling, and wishes to present to them the life with Christ as a daring adventure, how memor-

ably what he wishes to lodge in their minds is phrased in the modern rendering of Peter's description of Jesus as "the Pioneer of life." The relative novelty of the association of that idea with Christ and the richness of the word itself are enough for his hearers to carry away. Let him preach so as to illustrate and not spoil the text, and he has done all that is necessary.

Or suppose he is trying, perhaps with a little irony, to get beneath the skin of the clever and complacent, who fancy themselves making a success of life without God, and who dispense with the scruples of a Christian conscience as antiquated and hampering, how apt and pointed is Isaiah's comment to similar folk in Jerusalem: "Yet He also is wise." Quite likely the preacher need not expect instantaneous results from any sermon preached to such superior and self-assured persons. Only bitter experience can humble them into a teachable frame. But he may manage to write upon the walls of their minds a saying which will stand out in fiery letters when the crash comes and point them to whom they can turn for guidance: "Yet He also is wise."

Or take such challenging words of Jesus, spoken to the same types of persons as we confront Sunday after Sunday: "Wouldest thou be made whole?" "Have I been so long time with

you, and yet—?" "What is that to thee? follow thou Me." Such texts stick in the memory and hound men. One needs texts from which people cannot run away.

But we used the other adjective "wooing," because in experience Christ draws as well as pursues. Such texts are more difficult to employ, and a preacher not unnaturally shrinks from them. They are in themselves so appealing that he fears to weaken their effect by adding words of his own. All words or explanations seem paltry beside them. "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden," "God is love," "Greater love hath no man than this," "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The preacher may well let his sermon lead up to them, rather than start off with them. This prevents an anticlimax.

Or he can commence with some human situation, and then introduce them. For example, Mrs. Humphry Ward in her *Recollections* tells how in the later 'seventies she met Walter Pater at Oxford and, reckoning on his sympathy, said that orthodox Christianity "could not long maintain itself against its assailants, and that we should live to see its breakdown." He shook his head and looked rather troubled. "I don't think

so," he said. Then, with hesitation: "And we don't altogether agree. You think it's all plain. But I can't. There are such mysterious things. Take that saying, 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden.' How can you explain that? There is a mystery in it—something supernatural."

Such an introduction supplies a background for the text. That, after all, is the way in which the words were first used. Jesus, or John, or Paul, was moved by man's need and the amazing Divine response when he first uttered them. It is taking them out of their original mood to read them off in the necessarily cold first minute when preacher and people are beginning the sermon. It may be that they contain enough fuel in themselves and are so instantly combustible that they blaze up and warm preacher and hearers; but often they seem to come more appropriately after the preacher has told an incident or sketched a human situation, and broken the cake of convention or the crust of indifference in which a congregation's feelings are encased, and on their more tender mood lets fall these words of grace.

We have been insisting on great and moving themes; we must have texts to match them. But there are texts which express the theme but lack picturesqueness or pungency. One seeks a

phrase which can both dog the mind and charm it, a text which haunts and woos.

Third (and this applies to all sermons as well as to those we label evangelistic), the preacher will try for language which makes his hearers *see*. All works of art—and a sermon is one of the highest forms of literary creation—awaken the imagination. A moving speaker turns men's ears into eyes. They are made to see life's situations, and situations which lie in the realm of the spirit, and made to feel themselves in them. The language which a preacher wants is that of novelists and poets and dramatists, and of writers of letters and of autobiography, who capture and exhibit the workings of the mind and heart. He has to avoid the abstract, and for this reason he must rid himself not only of the jargon of theological lecture-rooms and of most of his scholarly books, but also of their unimaginative way of putting things. He must shun such prosaic and pedestrian forms and expressions as these lectures are cast in. Indeed the lecturer is aware that you have probably characterised them as "soup stock for sermons." We use our best china to serve our guests the fully prepared and flavoured soup, but the stock is kept in a plain crock. The form and speech which perforce have been employed in speaking of the contents of

preaching will not do for a congregation whose appetite must be sharpened and whose taste satisfied. It is the attractive china, and above all the seasoning, for which we are pleading.

In one of Robert Louis Stevenson's prefaces is a counsel to authors which is equally applicable to preachers: "What he cannot vivify he should omit." Part of the vivification is in a man's voice and manner and presence; but what is not vividly written can scarcely be made to live by the earnestness or passion of delivery, and what is alive on the written page kindles the speaker. Edmund Gosse describes Ibsen's preparation for his creative work as "incessant observation of real life, incessant capture of unaffected, unconsidered phases, actual living experience leaping in his hands like a captive wild animal." This is what the preacher, and particularly the preacher who, like the dramatist, is seeking an immediate response in awakened emotions that drive the will, must seek. We have to paint life's occurrences so that our hearers seem to themselves to be living through them. We have to take out of their mouths the phrases they use. We have to carry them down deeper than they usually peer for themselves, and show them their passions and inclinations, their motives and cravings, their misgivings and aspirings, as these

surge up and struggle, are repressed and surge again, in the volcanic crater of the human soul.

Style is partly a moral quality—a resolve to portray what one feels so that one's hearers feel it, an abnegation of slovenly and slipshod diction, a refusal to clutter up sentences with phrases which do not stand for actualities, a passion for the exact and comely word. And it is partly a gift of the imagination, bestowed in varying measures, sometimes dulled and sometimes enhanced by culture. A preacher, who is also pastor and administrator, cannot spend unlimited time on the composition of his sermons. He usually writes them under pressure, and probably they are more effective when so penned. He must acquire the habit of expressing his mind in forthright, lucid and touching speech. Joubert said that "to write well a man should have a natural facility and an acquired difficulty." Perhaps one may put it for our calling that a preacher should have a vehement desire to say what he intensely cares about and an exacting conscience and taste which make it hard for him to satisfy himself with its expression. He cannot afford the time to be fussy and finicky with his work: that would spoil it. It was said of John Muir, the charming and enlightening interpreter of our American forests and mountains and glaciers,

cradled in Scotland, that he polished his articles "until an ordinary man slips on them." John Robinson, the pastor of the Pilgrims at Leyden, said bluntly: "As a woman overcuriously trimmed is to be suspected, so is a speech." The sense of unaffected reality may be ironed out of a sermon. Let a man have the feel of people before him as he sits at his desk, and then let him write it speakingly, and go over it only to excise repetitions and substitute a more telling word and render entirely plain what may be obscure. But if he writes it speakingly, he must remember to keep seeing whereof he writes and put it down so that others too will see.

This is the value of illustration. Often the text is itself a picture. The characters of the Bible, almost always portrayed by its writers with a skill that reveals them in the briefest possible compass, are invaluable means of helping people to see their spiritual selves. Take the instance of the woman with a malady, about which she would naturally feel sensitive, who pushed her way to Jesus in the crowd—and what a help her story is when one is preaching on overcoming obstacles in reaching Christ. There are outward hindrances represented by that packed mass of human beings; there are hindrances in one's own condition—think of her physical weakness;

there are hindrances in one's own mind, represented by her long, disheartening chapter of futile attempts with many physicians and her womanly shrinking from publicly disclosing her disease; there are hindrances in Christ Himself, who will not let her go unnoticed, but stops and insists upon her coming forward before those hundreds of staring eyes and telling what has happened. The analytic insight in this livingly reported story on the evangelists' pages furnishes the preacher with the standard and the material with which to picture the obstacles his hearers face and with which to help them to a like overcoming faith.

And he must collect illustrations indefatigably. A preacher is far likelier to run short of illustrations than of texts, and the average hearer would more willingly forego the text than the illustration. To be sure, there are illustrations and illustrations. Every preacher must make his *index expurgatorius* of hackneyed anecdotes and threadbare metaphors and outworn quotations. And if he—lucky wight!—has gathered a rich store of fairly fresh material, let him beware of lugging in a good story with only a tenuous connection with the point he is using it to illustrate. But with this proviso that the preacher discriminate and have an unerring eye for relevancy in

the matter of illustration, one cannot urge its necessity too strongly in all preaching, and particularly in evangelistic preaching. It is the human incident vividly told which touches men's hearts. It is the homely simile which makes plain the profoundest spiritual truth.

Suppose one wants people to understand that in the last analysis faith is a venture, a trusting one's self utterly to God, take the analogy of learning to float. You tell a small boy that if he will relax his body and fling himself in the most helpless posture—on his back with outstretched arms and upturned palms on the water—he will be upborne. So the devout of all ages bid us cast ourselves on God. But if you have tried to teach a little boy to float, you have discovered how difficult it is to induce him not to keep at least one toe touching the bottom or not to hold his neck up stiffly to ensure his face from being lapped by ripples. You insisted: "You must let yourself go." Possibly he trusted you so entirely that what you told him to do, he did. More likely you had to say: "Watch me," and you abandoned yourself to the seemingly so unstable water, and perhaps then the boy was ready to follow your example. But probably the first time you had to promise that you would hold your arms underneath him, and if he began to

sink he could count on your support. Does not Christ in teaching us to use faith employ similar means? He speaks with convincing assurance: "Believe in God;" and some venture at His word. In life and in death He rests Himself upon His unseen Father, and turning to us, says, "Follow Me;" and more are induced to trust by His example. But He goes further, and promises to be with us alway, our Comrade in the life of faith, Himself our inspiration and stay; and with Him we commit ourselves to His and our Father's hands.

Or suppose he is trying to make men see how tragically possible it is to know the unsearchable riches of Christ and still be a pauper in soul. Are you familiar with the story of a Scotsman who played a rôle in the development of the State of California? His name was James W. Marshall. He had knocked about the world, seeking a living, and came to California, and found employment in a saw-mill in the Sacramento Valley. There in the year 1848, while watching the mill-race, he saw something shining in the sand and reached down and picked up several nuggets. He and his employer used the sulphuric acid test and convinced themselves it was gold. The news of his discovery flew over the land, and in 1849 occurred the rush to the gold fields. For several

years many millions in gold were mined in that valley, and fortunes made. Marshall worked with the rest, and occasionally struck rich finds, but he never held on to his wealth for long. After some years he was discovered in poverty, and a small grant was made him by successive sessions of the legislature. But one day in the 'eighties a party of campers entered what appeared a deserted cabin not far from the spot where the gold had first been seen, and found his dead body. A monument—a big bronze effigy—was put up to his memory—the memory of one who discovered that which made many wealthy and himself died in abject penury. And such men are in every congregation, familiar from childhood with the spiritual treasures of the Gospel, accustomed to seeing others in possession of them, sometimes seeming to own them themselves, but living and dying Christless.

And this brings me to a final point upon the kind of sermon a preacher will give when he is seeking to bring men to decision. Theme, text, illustrations, will not make an evangelistic preacher. You may recall Bagehot's remark upon Mr. Gladstone's oratory: "A man must not only know what to say; he must have a vehement longing to get up and say it." One need not enlarge upon that. If there be anything

under the sun in which a man has a keener interest than in fellow humans, if there be anything of greater worth to himself than the life with Christ in God, and if there be anything he would rather do than open the door into that life to them who are without, let him not stand in a Christian pulpit. And for those of us who dare to say before the Searcher of hearts that, as we know ourselves, this is our desire, let it be frankly said that no task is harder and more mysterious than preaching. Think what it is when it succeeds—a few sentences from the lips of a man on fire, and hearers are seeing and feeling the living God! We have been talking today of the technique of preaching, but there are men who know next to nothing about it, and by the sheer passion of their souls bring those who listen to them face to face with the Invisible. Quintillian put his finger on the secret when he wrote: *Ardeat orator qui vult accendere populum.* By all means let us avail ourselves of every suggestion that may increase our skill, and our life long let us give good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over to the preparation of our sermons, but never let us forget that it is flame, and flame in which a man's self is being consumed, which illumines and warms. And that this may never die down let us tell ourselves

that saying of Christ's which evangelists had not room for in their narratives, but which the memory of some disciple would not let go: "Whoso is near Me is near the fire."

DATE DUE

BV
4211
.C55

12,130

United Theological Seminary Library
MAIN BV4211.C55
Coffin, Henry What to preach,
3 0645 0001 0712 4